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AMAZING HEROES

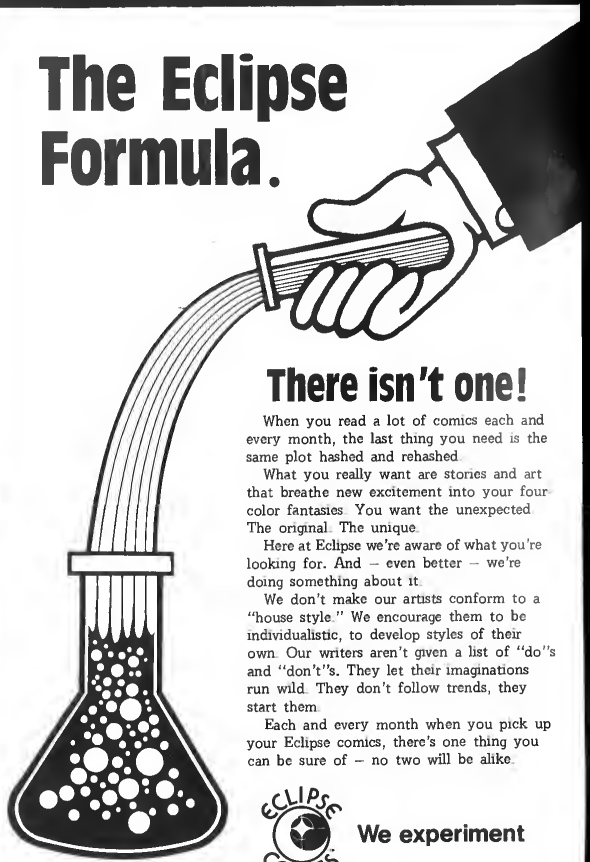
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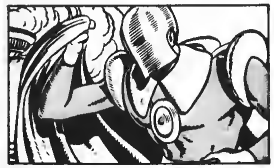
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Cover illustration penciled by **Sal Buscema**, retouched by **Steve Leialoha**. Colored by **Mr. Humbone**, separations by **Whn Jr.** Art © 1985 Marvel Comics Group. Special thanks to Steve Saffel.

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TOP OF THE POPS

Top 10/Top 20/Top 100 lists. Don'tcha just love 'em?

There's something really irritating about classifying the entire output of a year and coming up with a round figure of best work—I mean, on principle, I despise the things—but every year when January rolls around damned if I don't carefully scrutinize the various critics' "Best" lists in books, movies, rock, etc.

I can't tell you why readers fall for this scam year after year, but one of the major reasons writers swear by it is that it's a simple, economical way of promoting their favorites. And let's face it: Critics will deny this 'til they're blue in the face, but their secret dream is to be so influential that all they have to do is praise a work and promptly 100,000,000 loyal readers will storm their local bookstore/theatre/record shop and demand the masterpiece that their spiritual leader has showered with kudos.

Because of **AMAZING HEROES** (and my) affiliation with a comic-book publishing company—check the indicia on page three, bub—I was caught in something of a bind. If I disqualified our own output from the list, I would be less than honest (I think we produce top-of-the-line comics, so sue me*), but I don't particularly want to make it seem like I'm pumping our own stuff in this context. So I listed my favorites in alphabetical order, regardless of company, and then accused (!) FB titles, but (this is where it gets clever) left the numbering intact. Thus, if you really feel like it, you can with a minimum of effort interpolate the incriminating titles, but I can't be accused of self-promotion.

Since some people are never satisfied, there will be complaints that my Top 20 is actually a Top 16. For these people, I have added on another four titles that were originally disqualified for insufficient frequency.

A'right! Here we go. There are the comic books I read and get a big kick out of:

1) **American Flagg!** (First); (2) **Cerebus the Aardvark** (Aardvark-Vanaheim); (3) **Crossfire** (Eclipse); (5) **Flaming Carrot** (Renegade); (6) **Green Lantern** (DC); (7) **Groo the Wanderer** (Marvel/Epic); (11) **Mr. X** (Vortex); (12) **Myth-Adventures** (WaRP Graphics); (13) **Nexus** (First); (14) **Saga of the Swamp Thing** (DC); (15) **The Spirit** (Kitchen Sink); (16) **Starstruck** (Marvel/Epic); (17) **Steve Canyon Magazine** (Kitchen Sink); (18) **2,000 A.D.** (Eagle); (19) **Will Eisner's Quarterly** (Kitchen Sink); and (20) **Zot!** (Eclipse).

Runners-up, banished to the bottom of the list for inadequate frequency and similar heinous crimes: (21) **Army Surplus Komikz** (Quagmire); (22) **Mr. Monster** (Eclipse); (23) **Omaha the Cat Dancer** (SteelDragon Press); (24) **Sword of the Atom Special** (DC).

For those who keep count, that brings us a grand total of three titles apiece from DC, Eclipse, and Kitchen Sink; two titles apiece from First and Marvel/Epic; and one apiece from Aardvark-Vanaheim, Eagle, Renegade, Quagmire, SteelDragon Press, Vortex, and WaRP.

Moral: Single-company loyalty is dead—and if it isn't, it should be. Good comics these days come from a bewildering variety of publishers, and you have to stay on your toes to catch 'em all. And we at **AMAZING HEROES** are here to help you do that.

This month, do me a favor: choose any one of the above 20 titles that you haven't been buying, and pick up a copy. If you don't like it, send me a nasty letter and... well, I won't send your money back for the comic, but I'll feel real bad about it. Fair enough?

See you next issue. It'll be a goofy one. —KIM

** Figure of speech! Figure of speech! Down, boy!*



STARHAWKS



STARHAWKS





NEWSFLASHES

MARVEL NEWS: In ***Secret Wars II*** #1, the Beyonder begins his visit to Earth in Denver, Colorado, where he causes several natural disasters that the Molecule Men has to bring under control. The first confrontation, which will be between the New Mutants, Iron Man, and others, will take place in Hollywood. . . In April, the ***Raven Banner*** graphic novel will appear, and will take place in Asgard's past. The story concerns a stolen banner that will grant victory to its bearer in battle. The graphic novel will run 64 pages for $5.95. ALAN ZELENETZ, who has written ***Thor*** in the past, will script, and CHARLES VESS will paint the story in watercolors. . . The ***Balder and Kernille*** four-issue bi-monthly limited series is tentatively scheduled for June, and will be written by WALTER SIMONSON, and drawn by SAL BUSCEMA. The story will begin in the pages of ***Thor***, and will then proceed into the limited series. . . ***Thor*** **#s 357-358** will be a two-part story featuring Sif and Beta Ray Bill, and in **#358** they will encounter a mystery villain who is from the pages of ***Iron Man***. . . The cover of ***G.I. Joe*** **#36** will be a painting by MICHAEL GOLDEN. . . The cover to ***Moon Knight*** **#2** will be by LARRY HAMA and ARMANDO GIL. . . The covers to the ***Spider-Man Index*** will be done by a variety of people, all of whom have drawn the web-slinger at some time in the past. Issue **#4**'s cover will be by RON FRENZ and JOHN ROMITA, SR., issue **#5** will be by MIKE ZECK, issue **#6**'s by KEITH POLLARD, and issue **#7**'s by BOB LAYTON. . . As for the first two covers on the ***Fantastic Four Index***, which will debut in June, JOHN BYRNE will do the honors on the first issue, and BILL SIENKIEWICZ on the second. . . Terminus, a villain from the pages of the ***Fantastic Four***, will appear in ***Avengers*** **#s 256** and **257**. Issue **#258** will kick off a three-part story, in which the Avengers go to the Andromeda galaxy to rub elbows with the Skrulls. . . in the late summer, the revised edition of the ***Handbook of the Marvel Universe*** will debut, and it will contain new artwork by, among others, JOE KUBERT, JERRY ORDWAY, BILL LOEBS, and BRIAN BOLLAND. The new series, like the last one, will run 12 issues, 64 pages each on Mando, for $1.50. After this series, the revised edition will be collected together into three trade paperback volumes, which will sell for $5.95 each. . . JUNE BRIGMAN returns to the artistic reins of ***Power Pack*** with Issue **#11**.

CHARLTON'S BACK: In May, Charlton Comics will come back with a dozen bi-monthly titles, only one of which will feature new material. ***Charlton Action Featuring Static*** will contain new stories by STEVE DITKO, who worked at Charlton during the late '60s and early '70s. ROBIN SNYDER will edit the book. The first three episodes will be newly edited versions of the series that ran in ***Eclipse Monthly***. The first episode will be titled "The Four-Armed Man." In addition, there will be two back-up features in the first issue. "Pet Monster" is a tale of revenge and murder, and "The Beginning" is a science-fiction story, with a dash of mystery. Other books are ***Timmy the Timid Ghost***, ***Mysterious Traveler*** (which will feature reprints of DITKO's mystery and horror stories), ***Li'l Genius***, ***Iron Corporal***, ***Mister Megoo***, ***Dr. Greves***, ***Professor Coffin's Midnight Tales***, ***Thane of Begarth*** (a berberian title that will reprint work by STEVE SKEATES and JIM APARO), ***Atomic Mouse***, ***Punchy and the Black Crow*** (late of the aborted ***Zoo Funnies***), and ***Yang***. The books will cost 75 cents.

Charlton's back, and STEVE DITKO is contributing to their only new title ***Charlton Action Featuring Static****. This is a scene from the back-up story in the first issue.*



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COMICO NEWS: In ***Mage*** **#6**, SAM KIETH will be inking the work of penciller/writer MATT WAGNER. KIETH will be inking all of the issues of ***Mage*** through **#15**. Also beginning with **#6**, "Grendel" will begin as a permanent back-up feature. RICH RANKIN, inker of Comico's popular ***Elementals***, will ink "Grendel". . . ***The Next Men*** will debut this month, and the story concerns David Boyd, a wounded Viet Nam medic whose body is salvaged by a mysterious agency and is genetically reconstructed. Boyd

NEWSFLASHES NEWSFLASHES



Archie has once again revamped its ***Mighty Crueeders***, *now appearing with stories by RICH MARGOPOULOS and artwork by DICK AYERS*

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then becomes the unwilling vanguard for the agency's new strike force. ROGER McKENZIE will script the series, and newcomer VINCE ARGONDEZZI will pencil it. BILL ANDERSON, who has inked the ***Elementels*** in the past, will embellish this series as well. ***The Next Men*** will be on Baxter paper, and will cost $1.50. It will be bi-monthly.... ***The Mege Book***, which will collect together and reprint the first four issues of MATT WAGNER's creation, will be out this month as well, and will cost $6.95 for 128 squarebound pages.... ***Primer*** has been indefinitely suspended. The book consisted of new talent submissions, and may see print again in the fall of this year, if the schedule allows.... Comico has hired two more staff members. REGGIE BYERS has joined the company in the capacity of assistant prodution coordinator. BOB SCHRECK has joined the company as the advertising and promotions manager.

There has been a slight shake-up in the Comico line insofar as ***Evengeline*** is concerned. The third issue will be indefinitely delayed, pending negotiations between Comico and creator JUDY HUNT.

ECLIPSE NEWS: Eclipse will publish another two-part micro-series, in the same format as their ***Detectives, Inc.*** format. This series, as yet untitled, will reprint two stories, one by DOUG MOENCH and PAUL GULACY, and one by DON McGREGOR and PAUL GULACY. The stories have previously been published in the defunct Warren line of magazines. In the Eclipse comic, these stories will be in color for the first time. "Blood on Black Satin" was written by MOENCH, and "The Trespasser" by McGREGOR. Both stories will begin in the first issue and end in the second one. GULACY will do new covers for both issues, which will run 32 pages on Baxter, for $1.75.

SPIRITUAL TEXTBOOK: Eclipse will distribute to the direct-sales market a book by ***Spirit*** creator WILL EISNER. This book will be a serious, scholarly treatment of comics and sequential art, and will run 160 pages. The book had its roots in the series of essays on the subject that EISNER wrote for the ***Spirit*** magazine. Poorhouse Press, EISNER's own imprint, will

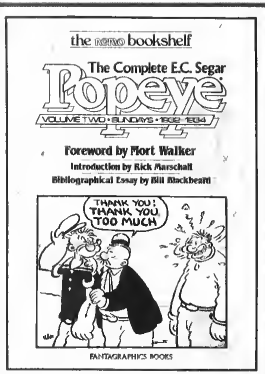


*DON McGREGOR and MARSHALL ROGERS' **Detectives, Inc.** is but one of three "micro-series" Baxter reprints planned by Eclipse*

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NEWSFLASHES NEWSFLASHES



*Fantagraphics Books' **Complete Segar Popeye Volume II** Now due in late February or early March*

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actually act as publisher, and will distribute the book outside the direct-sales market. The price for the book hasn't been determined yet. Printed inside the book will be annotated ***Spirit*** pages.

FIRST BRIEFS: In ***Badger* #7**, Larry's secret is revealed.... PHIL FOGLIO is doing an upcoming "Munden's Bar".... There may be a second one-shot of ***Shetter*** later this year.... Beginning in ***Jon Sable, Freelance* #26**, a three-part tribute to DASHIELL HAMMETT will appear.

KITCHEN NEWS: WILL EISNER is working on his newest project, which will debut in ***Will Eisner's Quarterly* #5**.... ***Spirit* #9** will contain three stories that have never been reprinted anywhere else. This issue will contain "Outcast," a parodical story about JANE RUSSELL.... In ***Megaton* #3**, the world comes to an end.

WARP NEWS: ***Unicorn Isle***, the previously announced 12 issue series by LEE MARRS and PAUL CHADWICK, has been taken off the schedule entirely. The decision was made because CHADWICK withdrew from the project in order to draw ***Dazzler*** for Marvel Comics.... WaRP has hired MIKE CATRON, formerly of Fantagraphics Books, as their Director of Publications. CATRON will oversee the scheduling, printing, production, and distribution of their products.

DC BRIEFS: MIKE SEKOWSKY will pencil the ***Justice League of America* #240**.... Batman and the Outsiders will team up with the Man of Steel in ***DC Comics Presents* #83**.... The ***Sword of the Atom Special* #2**, scheduled for July, will feature GIL KANE pencils and inks on the JAN STRNAD script.... ***DC Comics Presents* #84** will feature the talents of two of the industry's giants, JACK KIRBY and ALEX TOTH. GREG THEAKSTON will do the cover to what will be a Superman tale.... ***Best of DC Digest* #63** will reprint material from the humor magazine ***Plop***.... BILL WILLINGHAM, of Comico's ***Elementals***, will pencil a second issue of the ***Justice League of America***, which will be issue **#241**....

FANTAGRAPHICS BOOKS NEWS: The various production problems have been licked, and ***NEMO Annual* #1**, ***The Complete Segar Popeye Volume II***, and ***The Ditko Collection Volume I*** are all at the printer and are expected to be in general release by March.... The second volume of Fantagraphics Books' full-color ***Prince Vellent*** reprints, **"*The Eternal Quast*,"** will ship from its Belgian printer this Spring. It will be in retail stores sometime in June. The editors hope that later this year, the series will attain the quarterly schedule that has so far eluded it due to problems with the European color separators.... ***Amazing Heroes Preview Special* #1**, spinning off the popular "Preview" format developed in ***AH* #39** and **#62**, will ship in late May. SCOTT McCLOUD, of ***Zot!*** fame, will execute a special cover for the issue, and KEVIN NOWLAN has designed a logo for it.... NOWLAN is also working on designing the covers for ***The Comics Journal* #98** and **#99**.... CHRIS CLAREMONT has agreed to write the introduction to the second issue of JAIME HERNANDEZ's ***Mechanics*** mini-series, scheduled to ship in June.... With the HERNANDEZ Brothers' decision to leave Vortex's ***Mr. X***, Fantagraphics plans to begin releasing ***Love and Rockets*** on a monthly schedule later this year—"as soon as Los Bros. have enough of a backlog, and feel comfortable with the new schedule," according to editor GARY GROTH.... And Fantagraphics Books has hired GABRIEL VEGA to work in promotion and production; Vega is part owner of a comic book shop and will split his duties between the two jobs for the foreseeable future.



Coming DISTRACTIONS

MARCH 1-15

AARDVARK-VANAHEIM

☐ **CEREBUS THE AARDVARK #72**
Story/Art/Cover **Dave Sim**
[$1.70 direct-sales black-and white comic; ships 3/15]

☐ **normalman #6**
Story/Art/Cover **Valentino**
[$2.00 direct-sales color comic; ships 3/15]



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ARCHIE COMICS

☐ **MIGHTY CRUSADERS #12**
The Mighty Crusaders face a thunderstorm among other things.
Story **Rich Margopoulos**
Art **Ayers & Espositio**
"The She-Fox"
Story **Rich Margopoulos**
Art **Kupperberg & Giaccia**
Cover **Ayers & Chic Stone**
[75¢ color comic; ships 3/12; newsstand o/s 4/2]

DC COMICS

☐ **AMETHYST #7**
Learn the secret of Prince Arnet.
Story **Mishkin & Cohn**
Art **Estrada & Tanghal**
[75¢ color comic; ships 3/19; newsstand o/s 4/11]

☐ **ARAK, SON OF THUNDER #46**
The Son of Thunder meets Thor!
Story **Roy & Dann Thomas**
Art/Cover **Tony DeZuniga**
[75¢ color comic; ships 3/19; newsstand o/s 4/11]

☐ **ATARI FORCE #19**
The force returns to New Earth.
Story **Mike Baron**
Art **Barreto & Villagran**
Plus a second feature starring Taz, "Vengeance."
Story/Art **Dave Hannigan**
Cover **Cullins & Garcia Lopez**
[75¢ color comic; ships 3/12; newsstand o/s 4/4]

☐ **BATMAN #385**
Story **Doug Moench**
Art **Hoberg & Alcala**
Cover **Cullins & Giordano**
[75¢ color comic; ships 3/19; newsstand o/s 4/11]

☐ **BATMAN ANNUAL #9**
Special issue, featuring artwork by **Kevin O'Neill, Jerry Ordway, Paul Smith, Alex Nino,** and **Dan Jurgens.**
Story **Mike Barr**
Cover **Blasette & Totleben**
[$1.25 48-page color comic; ships 3/19; newsstand o/s 4/11]

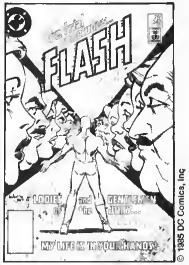
☐ **BEST OF DC DIGEST #62**
Featuring DC's best Batman stories, including the Special story by **Mike W. Barr** and **Michael Golden.**
[$1.50 96-page digest comic; ships 3/12; newsstand o/s 4/4]

☐ **DC COMICS PRESENTS #83**
Superman and Batman and the Outsiders guest starring Alfred.
Story **Mike W. Barr**
Art/Cover **Novick & Hunt**
[75¢ color comic; ships 3/12; newsstand o/s 4/4]

☐ **DC UNIVERSE: CRISIS ON INFINITE EARTHS #4**
The worlds come to a climactic conclusion.
Story **Marv Wolfman**
Art **Perez & Giordano**
Cover **George Perez**
[75¢ color comic; ships 3/12; newsstand o/s 4/4]

☐ **DEADMAN #3**
Story **Jack Miller**
Art/Cover **Neal Adams**
[$1.75 48-page direct-sales color comic; ships 3/12]

☐ **FLASH #347**
Flash's lawyer and the District Attorney deliver their summations.



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Story **Cary Bates**
Art **Infantino & McLaughlin**
Cover **Infantino & Janson**
[75¢ color comic; ships 3/19; newsstand o/s 4/11]

☐ **THE FURY OF FIRESTORM #37**
Prof. Stein journeys to Pittsburgh.
Story **Gerry Conway**
Art **Kayanan & Kupperberg**
[75¢ color comic; ships 3/12; newsstand o/s 4/4]

☐ **HAWKMAN #3**
Hawkman takes the offensive.
Story **Tony Isabella**
Art **Howell & Alcala**
Cover **Howell & Giordano**
[75¢ color comic; ships 3/12; newsstand o/s 4/4]

☐ **JEMM, SON OF SATURN #11**
The destruction of Claudius Tull.
Story **Greg Potter**
Art/Cover **Colan & McLeod**
[75¢ color comic; ships 3/19; newsstand o/s 4/11]

☐ **JUSTICE LEAGUE OF AMERICA #240**
A JLA story featuring the '60s JLAers as drawn by their '60s artist!
Story **Kurt Busiek**
Art **Mike Sekowsky**
Cover **Patton & Machlan**
[75¢ color comic; ships 3/12; newsstand o/s 4/4]

☐ **LEGION OF SUBSTITUTE HEROES SPECIAL #1**
Can the Subs stop the conquering of

COMING COMICS — MARCH 1-15

Matter-Eater Lad's home planet?
Story **Paul Levitz**
Art/Cover **Giffen & Kesel**
[$1.25 direct-sales color comic; ships 3/12]

☐ **LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES #12**
Three Legionnaries resign!
Story **Paul Levitz**
Art/Cover **Lightle & Mahlstedt**
[$1.25 direct-sales color comic; ships 3/19]

☐ **OMEGA MEN #28**
Ryand'r meets the creatures of the synoptic net.
Story **Todd Klein**
Art/Cover **Shawn McManus**
[$1.25 direct-sales color comic; ships 3/19]

☐ **RED TORNADO #1**
Red Tornado, spurned by his friends, faces the Construct—alone!
Story **Kurt Busiek**
Art **Infantino & McLaughlin**
[75¢ color comic; ships 3/19; newsstand o/s 4/11]



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☐ **STAR TREK #16**
Kirk and company return to our dimension to face—the Federation.
Story **Mike W. Barr**
Art/Cover **Sutton & Villagran**
[75¢ color comic; ships 3/19; newsstand o/s 4/11]

☐ **SUPERMAN #409**
"The Sleepwalker from Krypton"
Story **C. Boldman**
Art **Curt Swan**
With a second feature written by **R. Stradley.**
[75¢ color comic; ships 3/19; newsstand o/s 4/11]

☐ **TALES OF THE TEEN TITANS #54**
Gar Logan breaks into prison to kill the Terminator.
Story **Marv Weltman**
Art **Buckler & DeCarlo**

DELUXE COMICS

☐ **WALLY WOOD'S T.H.U.N.D.E.R. AGENTS #3**
"Wally Wood's Thunder Agents"
Story **Cockrum & M. Anderson**
Art **Cockrum & M. Anderson**
"Lightning"
Story **Tom & Mary Bierbaum**
Art **Giffen & Bryant**
"NoMan"
Story **Steve Perry**
Art **Ditko & Theakston**
Cover **George Perez**
Plus pin-ups, and more.
[$2.00 48-page color Baxter comic; o/s March]

EAGLE COMICS

☐ **2000 A.D. #4**
Judge Dredd. "The Invisible Man"
Story **John Wagner**
Art **Ron Smith**
D.R. & Quinch. "D.R. and Quinch Get Drafted Part Two"
Our two friends accidentally obliterate half their platoon. Oops!
Story **Alan Moore**
Art **Alan Davis**
Strontium Dog. The Schickelgruber Grab Part Two"
Story **Alan Grant**
Art **Carlos Ezquerra**



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Cover **Ed Barreto**
[75¢ color comic; ships 3/12; newsstand o/s 4/4]

☐ **VIGILANTE #19**
Nightwing hunts down Adrian Chase.
Story **Marv Wolfman**
Art **Smith & Magyer**
Cover **Ted Smith**
[$1.25 direct-sales color comic; ships 3/12]

Cover **Brian Bolland**
[$1.00 direct-sales Manilo color comic; ships 3/12]



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ECLIPSE COMICS

☐ **AZTEC ACE #11**
The conclusion of the two-part story set in the Aztec jungle
Story **Doug Moench**
Art/Cover **Day & Redondo**
[$1.75 direct-sales color comic; ships 3/12]

☐ **CAP'N QUICK AND A FOOZLE #2**
All by **Marshall Rogers**
[$1.75 direct-sales color comic; ships 3/12]

☐ **CROSSFIRE #9**
Another Industrial spy crosses Crossfire's path.
Story **Mark Evanier**
Art/Cover **Dan Spiegle**
[$1.50 direct-sales color comic; ships 3/5]



© 1985 Mark Evanier & Dan Spiegle

FANTAGRAPHICS BOOKS

☐ **JOURNEY #18**
The Hessian Brothers kidnap Elmey Allyn Kraft, a daring rescue attempt, a shooting contest, and more.
All by **W. Messner-Loebs**
[$2.00 black and white direct sales comic; ships 3/10]



© 1985 William Messner-Loebs

FIRST COMICS

☐ **THE BADGER #6**
"Surfin' USA"
Ham threatens to overwhelm his enemies with a tidal wave.
Story **Mike Baron**
Art/Cover **Reinhold/Doe**
[$1.75 direct-sales color comic; ships 3/7]

☐ **GRIMJACK #12**
"Slaughterhouse"



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Reunited with some old friends, John Gaunt searches for a missing refugee.
Story **John Ostrander**
Art/Cover **Timothy Truman**
Munden's Bar: "Hard Case, Part One"
The return of Jericho Noleski.
Story **John Ostrander**
Art **Bill Loebs**
[$1.25 direct-sales Mando color comic; ships 3/14]

☐ **NEXUS #10**
"Talking Heads"
The slave heads terraform a dead moon—and discover something startling.
Story **Mike Baron**
Art **Rude & Shanower**
Cover **Steve Rude**
Coloring **Lee Derocheid**
Plus: A "Tales of Dave" back-up story.
Story **Mike Baron**
Art **Bill Willingham**
[$1.75 direct-sales color comic; ships 3/7]



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IMAGE INTERNATIONAL

☐ **THE SEVEN SAMURIOD**
Originally announced from Pacific Comics, this graphic novel features a cosmic battle between the immortal samurai robot warriros and the Dark Emperium.
All by **Frank Brunner**
Colors **Jon Brunner**
[$6.95 60-page color graphic novel; ships early March]

KITCHEN SINK

☐ **STEVE CANYON #9**
This volume features the introduction of Doe Redwood, a women pilot, plus more, in the new square-bound format.
All by **Milton Caniff**
[$4.95 square-bound direct-sales black-and-white magazine; ships in March]

MARVEL COMICS

☐ **ALPHA FLIGHT #24**
This issue features the resolution of the Sasquatch story.
Story **John Byrne**
Art/Cover **Byrne & Wiecek**
[$1.25 46-page color comic; ships 3/12; newsstand o/s 4/2]

☐ **AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #265**
"The Commuter Cometh"
Guest starring the Human Torch.
Story **Peter David**
Art/Cover **Bob McLeod**
[60¢ color comic; ships 3/12; newsstand o/s 4/2]

☐ **CAPTAIN AMERICA #307**
Featuring the new villain, Madcap.
Story **Mark Gruenwald**
Art **Neary & Janke**
Cover **Paul Neary**
[60¢ color comic; ships 3/12; newsstand o/s 4/2]

☐ **CLOAK AND DAGGER #2**
Dagger returns to her mother—only to find that drugs pervade her "normal" life.
Story **Bill Mantlo**
Art/Cover **Leonardi & Austin**
[60¢ color comic; ships 3/5; newsstand o/s 3/26]

☐ **CONAN THE KING #29**
"The Sleeping Lion"
Story **Don Kraar**
Art **Silvestri & Nichole**
[$1.25 46-page color comic; ships 3/5; newsstand o/s 3/26]

☐ **DAREDEVIL #220**
The final fate of Heather Glenn.
Story **Denny O'Neil**
Art/Cover **David Mazzucheli**
[60¢ color comic; ships 3/5; newsstand o/s 3/26]

☐ **DAZZLER #38**
Wolverine and Colossus are guest featured.
Story **Archie Goodwin**
Art/Cover **Chadwick & Guice**
[60¢ color comic; ships 3/12; newsstand o/s 4/2]

☐ **GARGOYLE #2**
The Gargoyle tries to strike a deal with the Devil.
Story **J.M. DeMatteis**
Art **Mark Badger**
Cover **John Jey Muth**
[75¢ color comic; ships 3/5; newsstand o/s 3/26]

☐ **INDIANA JONES #29**
The conclusion of the Chinese mummy story.
Story **Linda Grant**
Art **Villamante & Sutanadi**
Cover **Keith Pollard**
[60¢ color comic; ships 3/12; newsstand o/s 4/2]

☐ **MICRONAUTS #10**
Guest starring the Time Traveler.
Story **Peter Gillis**
Art **K. Jones & Patterson**
Cover **Kelley Jones**
[60¢ color comic; ships 3/12; newsstand o/s 4/2]

☐ **NEW MUTANTS #29**
Magneto and Dazzler are among the guest stars in this issue.
Story **Chris Claremont**
Art/Cover **Bill Sienkiewicz**
[60¢ sales comic; ships 3/5; newsstand o/s 3/26]

☐ **POWER PACK #12**
This issue ties in with the current issue of *X-Men*, as the kids are captured by Moriocks.
Story **Louise Simonson**
Art/Cover **Brigman & Wiecek**
[60¢ color comic; ships 3/12; newsstand o/s 4/2]

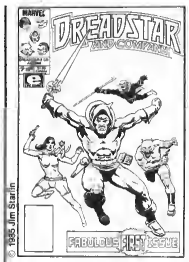
☐ **SAVAGE SWORD OF CONAN #113**
"Quest for the Shrine of Yuma"
Story **Larry Yakete**
Art **Ernie Chen**
[$1.50 black-and white magazine; ships 3/12; newsstand o/s 4/2]

☐ **THE THING #25**
An offbeat story involving leprechauns.
Story **Mike Carlin**
Art/Cover **Wilson & Sinnett**
[60¢ color comic; ships 3/5; newsstand o/s 3/26]

☐ **WEB OF SPIDER-MAN #4**
With Dr. Octopus.
Story **Danny Fingeroth**
Art **LaRocque & Mooney**
Cover **John Byrne**
[60¢ color comic; ships 3/5; newsstand o/s 3/26]



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MARVEL EPIC COMICS

☐ **BLACK DRAGON #1**
Stories of knightly adventure, first of six issues.
Story **Chris Claremont**
Art/Cover **John Bolton**
[$1.50 color comic; ships 3/5]

☐ **DREADSTAR AND COMPANY #1**
Reprints the first issue of *Dreadstar*.
Story/Art/Cover **Jim Starlin**
[75¢ color comic; ships 3/5; newsstand o/s 3/26]

☐ **GROO THE WANDERER #4**
Groo is shanghaied by a slave ship.
All by **Sergio Aragonee**
Plus **Mark Evanier**
[75¢ color comic; ships 3/12; newsstand o/s 4/2]

☐ **MOONSHADOW #2**
Moonshadow discovers death on a world where it's big business.
Story **J.M. DeMatteis**
Art/Cover **John Jey Muth**
[$1.50 direct-sales color comic; ships 3/5]

☐ **TIME SPIRITS #4**
A special issue featuring four stories illustrated by **Al Williamson, Rick Veitch, Steve Bissette**, and **Tom Yeates**.
Story **Steve Perry**
Cover **Tom Yeates**
[$1.50 direct-sales color comic; ships 3/5]

MARVEL STAR COMICS

☐ **EWOKS #2**
Vuicanian space pirates.
Story **Dave Manak**
Art **Kremer & Roettcher**
Cover **Warren Kremer**
[60¢ color comic; ships 3/12; newsstand o/s 4/2]

☐ **PETER PORKER, SPECTACULAR SPIDER-HAM #2**
"Buzzards and Bullfrogs"
Story **Steve Skeates**
Art **Armstrong & Albelo**
Plus an "Uncanny X-Bugs" story by **Steve Mellor**.
[65¢ color comic; ships 3/5; newsstand o/s 3/26]

☐ **PLANET TERRY #4**
Story **Lennie Hermen**
Pencils/Cover **Warren Kremer**
Inks **Vince Colletta**
[65¢ color comic; ships 3/5; newsstand o/s 3/26]

☐ **WALLY THE WIZARD #4**
Story **Brown**
Art **Peet & Colletta**
Cover **Warren Kremer**
[65¢ color comic; ships 3/12; newsstand o/s 4/2]

MARVEL U.K.

☐ **CAPTAIN BRITAIN #4**
"Sid's Story"
He's pathetic, tragic, and very dangerous.
Story **Jamie Delano**
Art/Cover **Alan Davis**
The Freefall Warriors: Mission Impossible.
Story **Steve Parkhouse**
Art **Jerry Perie**
Absalom Dask, Delek Killer
Story **Steve Moore**
Art **Steve Dillon**
Night Raven
Story **Steve Parkhouse**
Art **David Lloyd**
[$1.75 direct-sales black and white magazine; ships March]

☐ **DOCTOR WHO #09**
In addition to interviews, previews, and articles, the issue features a *Dr. Who* comic strip by **Steve Parkhouse** and **John Ridgway**.
[$2.00 direct-sales black and white magazine; ships March]



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IT'S NOT OVER YET!

KEN HART talks to JIM SHOOTER about SECRET WARS II

The recently completed *Secret Wars* maxi-series was certainly no secret to the comics-buying public. To say that it was a big seller for Marvel is like saying Arnold Schwarzenegger lifts weights. According to Jim Shooter, scribe of *Secret Wars* and Marvel's big kahuna, the series was "the best selling comic book in the past 25 years. It sold roughly half-again what *The X-Men* sells."

Planning

With this in mind, it should come as no surprise that a sequel will soon appear, with the rather unusual title of *Secret Wars II*. Shooter says this continuation had been planned from the very beginning, when he submitted the original *Secret Wars* proposal more than two years ago. Shooter concedes that the sequel would probably have been dropped if the series had failed commercially, but that certainly didn't happen. *Secret Wars II* will run for nine issues, beginning in April, and the final issue will be double-sized. "This time, we're planning that from the beginning. Last time, we kind of realized half-way through that we had to make the last one double-sized," says Shooter in regards to the 12th issue of *Secret Wars*.

Sal Buscema has pencilled the first issue of *SWII*, but his workload and his location in Virginia are preventing him from working on the succeeding chapters. As a result, veteran Marvel artist Al Milgrom will take over. Steve Leialoha is the inker for the series.

The structure of the new tale will be different from its predecessor's. Instead of fitting neatly into a time gap between issues, *SWII* will crossover with virtually every Marvel title at least once. "It's going to touch every character in the Marvel Universe," says Shooter. The sequel focuses on the Beyonder, the mysterious and powerful being who brought the heroes and villains together in *Secret Wars*. Most of the new series takes place on Earth, which the Beyonder has decided to visit in person. "As he goes around, he will encounter lots of people, some of them Marvel heroes. And as he encounters these people, the story will continue into their own series. In issue #1 of *Secret Wars Volume II*, he encounters Captain America, Iron Man, the New Mutants and the X-Men," and the story directly continues into the four books featuring those characters (*New Mutants* #30, *Captain America* #308, *X-Men* #196, and *Iron Man* #197.) Then some aspects from those issues will be carried back into *Secret Wars II*.

"The storyline is really an incredible thing to plot out," Shooter says. "I've been working with practically all the writers and all the editors, because it touches all of the books. It's sort of like a tree, in a way." The "branches" will not always lead back to the main book. For example, both *Web of Spider-Man* #6 and *Amazing Spider-Man* #268 will deal with a consequence of something that happened in *SWII* #2, but the problem will be resolved in the Spider-Man books and won't lead back to *Secret Wars II*.

"Generally speaking," explains Shooter, "if the Beyonder is appearing in the other books, then it leads back in. It's very complicated to explain, but it's very easy to read. If you read *Secret Wars II* all by itself, you'll understand the story; it'll be fun. If you read the other titles that it ties into, then you get the full tapestry, you get the whole story and all the people it affects. The best thing is if you read them all, because you're reading a story that encompasses something like 44 issues, and a good story, I think." Judging from this, it's obvious Marvel anticipates another huge flow of greenbacks from the public.

Collaboration

Shooter says one of the more enjoyable aspects of piecing together the series is the opportunity to creatively collaborate with Marvel's writers and artists. Because of the large cast, in fact, "I'm forced to. Therefore, I have all of the best people in the business helping me to plot my story, because as I sit down and explain the main storyline and what the thrust is, and we talk about what's going to happen in the Fantastic Four and whatever, they contribute ideas and I contribute ideas and we get to work very closely together. John (Byrne) had some events that he was going to do in *Fantastic Four* and asked me if I would do them for him in *Secret Wars II*, which would give him more space to focus on something else he wanted to do. Well, that played into my hands perfectly, because it was really germane to what I was accomplishing in *Secret Wars II*, so the crossover between *Secret Wars II* and *Fantastic Four* is more than anyone knows, because we literally were trading pieces of plot to each other, and I think it





worked out really well. Also, it's good ... to challenge everybody, to get the juices flowing."

He adds that people were eager to contribute to both the first series and the sequel. "When I first told everybody, 'Hey, I'm gonna do this big thing where it's going to tie in with all the books,' the first reaction was 'Oh My God!' and then later, my phone never stopped ringing. There was always Byrne or Stern or somebody calling up with suggestions, ideas, things they wanted me to accomplish, things *they* would like to accomplish that they wanted me to set up ... and, like I say, I had the main plot worked out, but they kept contributing all sorts of elements to the plot. That's why the last issue had to be double-sized."

Developments which Shooter claims he originally plotted for one issue of *Secret Wars* ended up appearing in later issues, because of the extra material. As an example, Marvel mentioned early last year that Spider-Man's original costume was shredded in a battle with the Absorbing Man that would be shown in *Secret Wars* #6. Readers buying that issue were surprised to discover that Spidney's costume stayed intact. The event actually did not occur until issue #8.

Shooter says that's because of a lot of things which I had agreed with the various writers to accomplish. With *The X-Men*, for instance, Magneto has been going through a huge character change. He's coming to grips with his 'means to the end' logic and realizing that no matter how noble his purposes are, that makes him a bad guy. Well, that had mostly been accomplished in *The X-Men*, and what I was doing was the back story. I was showing some of the thought processes that led to this change. "And so all of the little relationships ... where he was deceived by the Wasp, where he had his discussions with Xavier, and his confrontations with Captain America ... all of that was stuff that I had contrived with Chris to further develop the character of Magneto, to make people understand how it was that he came to these realizations—that really hadn't been explored in *The X-Men*."

Shooter stresses that this interrelation will also be a part of the sequel. "I really believe it's worth reading all 44 (issues); it's not just a cosmetic crossover. It's a serious crossover into each book. Nothing like this, as far as I know, has ever been attempted, and as a veteran of one issue that has so far been completed, I have to say that it worked pretty well."

The Beyonder

In *Secret Wars II*, "we're going to find out all about the Beyonder. He comes to Earth, and we'll find out what he was and what he is now and what is going to become of him. Basically, the Beyonder existed in a universe where essentially he was God. He was everything, and everything was him. There was nothing that was not him. God before Genesis, if you will. And, somehow, an event took place on Earth, which we haven't specified but which we will learn in the course of the series, which opened a pinhole into this universe ... this multiverse, as a matter of fact. He was removed entirely from any of the dimensions and any of the realms that are associated with Earth." He saw our planet, and was amazed by the sight of these little life-forms, "these paramecium".

"He became very interested, and opened up that hole again and observed, for a period of presumable years. To him, that's nothing. Of course, the beings who stood out to him were the ones who were the most noticeable. You've got to picture it: here is a being who is so completely alien, he doesn't even understand the concept of dating. There is nothing to do where he is. So, at any rate, he sets about to study, which is the story of *Secret Wars I*. If you've read that, then you know that in the course of it, rather against his will, he becomes more involved with them than he ever wanted to, because Doom goes after him and succeeds in stealing away ... the better part of his powers, to the point where Doom thinks the Beyonder is dead."

So the Beyonder has become "forcibly intertwined with these little paramecium, which has served only to intrigue him more. And so, in *Secret Wars II*, he's never known curiosity before ... and he decides to resolve it by coming down to Earth and walking among the paramecium. As I explained to all the writers and



An Al Milgrom-pencilled page from SECRET WARS II #1.

A COMICS INTERVIEW PUBLICATION

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In issue #7, a back-up series called "Missing Beings" begins, written by Henry Vogel and drawn by Bill Neville. It's off to a very promising start and Bill's art is excellent, making *Southern Knights* even more worthwhile. Check it out.

--Don Thompson
THE COMICS BUYER'S GUIDE
October 26, 1984

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editors up here, at this stage of the game, he doesn't know anything. For instance, if somebody hit him, it would never occur to him to hit anybody back. He doesn't know that! He would be startled to have been hit, I suppose, but it's not a case of the 'cackling mad dog' at all. It's more Siddharta' than it is typical super-villain hysterics.

The Beyonder's lack of knowledge will change, says Shooter, "and he will grow through a process of evolution. He's not like a child. He's just naive. But we've got plans to develop him and to play out his life on Earth that I think are good and that lead to some interesting and terrible consequences."

When asked if any major changes will occur as a result of the sequel (along the lines of Spidey's costume switch and the FF's roster change), Shooter replied, "Well, a lot of people thought that was the purpose of *Secret Wars I*... nothing of the sort.

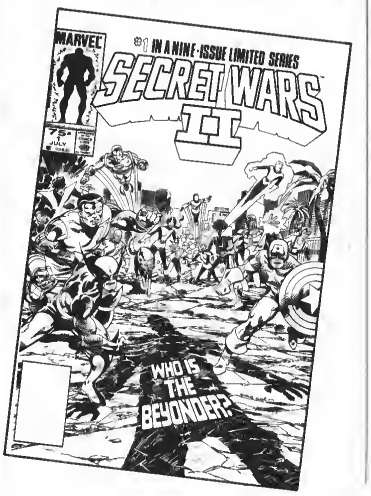
From that vantage, "it seemed at face value... well, Reed Richards says at one point, 'I can't believe that some mad god has brought us here just to fight.' And, of course, that wasn't the case. But from their point-of-view, they didn't have any information, they didn't know why... it was pretty cut and dry until later in the series, when all of those elements that we set up at the beginning start to come together, and some of the implications of all that's been going on become revealed to the characters. And so now, since I'm following the Beyonder, I think all of the underlying philosophy and underlying thought is going to be more evident."

As mentioned earlier, Shooter says every Marvel hero will appear, but the pivotal roles in the series will go to "the ones you might expect. I believe the X-Men make three appearances, the New Mutants make three appearances, the Avengers make two or three appearances, the Fantastic Four I know make three appearances by 'appearances,' I mean they're involved in at least three of the issues of the main story, and several of their own. I think Spider-Man makes three appearances, although Spider-Man actually makes the most appearances, because his storyline carries through several of his own titles, so he probably is going to be most in evidence of the characters. Everyone is going to be touched. Everyone in the whole world is going to be affected in one way or another, whether they know it or not, by the events that take place here. So naturally, the people that you expect are going to be in the foreground."

Writing and Editing

Who is the masochist in charge of coordinating this saga? "Well, I burned up Tom DeFalco on the first one, so I had to go to somebody else. Bob Budiansky volunteered... that is, everyone else stepped backward." Shooter is pleased with the results of the first issue. "Tom and Bob are really good at this. When I deal with them, I put on my writer's hat. They're the editor. I do what they say. I didn't pull rank on Tom, and I won't pull rank on Bob. I expect it'll work out as well as it did with Tom. None of these people up here are bashful about telling me what they think.

Shooter is somewhat defensive when asked if he had any difficulties getting back into the writing groove for *Secret Wars*. "I didn't think so. I got some terrible



reviews in the fan press, but I also got the highest sales that comics have seen in decades, and the mail was just overwhelmingly positive. I think it's those six guys that write the reviews that hated it, and the rest seemed to like it. I look back on the stuff that I wrote, and I think it's some of the best stuff that I ever wrote, largely because I had help from virtually everybody. I was working very closely with all of our various writers and editors. I find it very odd that the things people would sort of pick on ... to complain about were the exact bits that I worked out with the writers, that they were so delighted with."

Any examples? "I think somebody wrote in and said something about what Johnny Storm would say in a certain situation, and I remember when I was talking to Byrne about the situation and we were discussing what Johnny Storm would say, he was delighted. He thought that was perfect. And I read a review saying the Torch would never speak like that.

"In a way, that's like telling Jim Henson what Kermit would say. I'm the guy who's supposed to be in charge, and whenever there's any dispute or question, I'm the person who resolves it." In other words, Jim Shooter has the final say on whether or not any character's dialogue is "right." "I have Stan Lee's old job, and I do the best I can. I'm very proud of what I did."

The mail on *Secret Wars* has been very positive, according to Shooter. "We also got a lot of mail which I consider good negative mail, when you get somebody writing in that's outraged about a character, and they're talking about them as though they were a person." He says he received similar letters several years ago, when he gave a previously healthy Hank Pym a nervous breakdown in *The Avengers*. Such letters make Shooter feel good. "If they don't care about the characters, we might as well surrender."

He's sorry that Sal Buscema won't be continuing on *Secret Wars II* after contributing "a hell of a first issue." Sal has recently been getting increased fan recognition for his work, Shooter says. "Sal has always been terrific, and he suddenly got better."

As things stand now, it seems Jim Shooter will have another hit to his credit when *Secret Wars II* debuts in April—despite what the critics say. ●



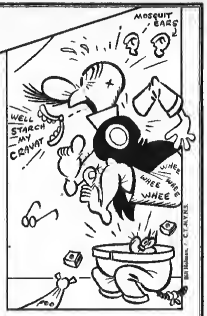


KEN HART last contributed to the **AH** *1985 Preview Issue*, *despite the glaring and unforgivable omission of his name in the editorial*

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RETAILERS: If you love Love and Rockets, this is your chance to introduce the L&R work to fans who prefer color comic books to black and white magazines. Bear in mind JAIME's growing popularity among fans and new fans consider Fantagraphics Books' state-of-the-art coloring and production values . . . look at the phenomenal retail bag campaign we're preparing . . . and order high on this future collector's item!

*NOTE: **Mechanics** will carry a "Recommended for Mature Readers" advisory.*

Mechanics Mini Series #1. 36 pages. Full color. Published by Fantagraphics Books, Inc. Shipping in May. $2.00 (Canada: $2.50).

PREVIEW ISSUE

By Popular Demand! AH Preview Special #1

In 1983, the ***Amazing Heroes Preview Issue*** had to be reprinted in order to meet distributor and retailer demand. In 1984, more than 20,000 copies of the Preview Issue rolled off the presses just to meet initial orders.

Now, we proudly introduce the twice a year ***Amazing Heroes Preview Special #1***—a refinement of the concept that has become a staple in the comics industry. The increased frequency allows for more up to date coverage of the entire range of upcoming comics—plus special information about this summer's conventions. And the cover is by ***Zeit's*** brilliant SCOTT McCLOUD!

As always, we'll have extensive previews of every title planned or currently on the stands (over 250!), with lots of exclusive artwork and quotations from everyone. We have yet to hear of a dealer who overstocked on an ***Amazing Heroes Preview Issue***.

Amazing Heroes Preview Special #1. 148 pages. Published by Fantagraphics Books, Inc. Shipping in May. $3.95. (Canada: $4.95).



Arn Saba Speaks In COMICS JOURNAL #99

Nail the Horse creator ARN SABA highlights ***THE COMICS JOURNAL #99*** with a revealing full-length interview. DALE LUCIANO's Newave Comics Survey continues. HEIDI MacDONALD wonders: Why the X-Men Don't Work? MILTON KNIGHT, Jr., creator of *Hugo*, contributes an article about the comics market. Ethics and the comics industry is examined in a behind the scenes feature by insider SCOTT EDELMAN. Visit Archie Andrews a stomping grounds again in "Riverdale Revisited." The usual complement of letters reviews, a GARY GROTH editorial and an in-depth news section round off the issue. ***Journal #99*** features a compositive cover starring Archie, Neil, and the Uncanny X-Men.

The Comics Journal #99. 100 pages. Published by The Comics Journal, Inc. Shipping in May. $2.95 (Canada: $3.75).

Retail Bags Available For a Penny!

As part of our ongoing effort to help retailers sell our publications, ***Fantagraphics Books*** is making plastic retail bags available to comic shops during May 1985. Each bag, selling for only a penny apiece, will display both an original ***Dalgoda*** illustration by DENNIS FUJITAKE and a detail from the cover to ***Mechanics #1*** by JAIME HERNANDEZ.

Last summer, ***Fantagraphics Books*** conducted an experimental retail bag promotion in coincide with the release of ***Dalgoda #1***. Response to that experiment was phenomenal: in just a few short weeks, ***Fantagraphics Books*** distributed over 110,000 bags. Retailers reported that carrying the bags made a significant contribution to their high sales on ***Dalgoda***.

The overwhelming response led us to experimental promotion has prompted Fantagraphics Books to expand the availability of the retail bags by offering them for a minimal price and selling them with the cooperation of comic book distributors. The sale of the bags is essentially a co-op advertising arrangement because the money that ***Fantagraphics Books*** gets will not even cash covering the costs of printing and distributing the bags.

If you haven't yet ordered bags from your distributor, please hurry! In addition to providing you with inexpensive, handsome bags to pack your customers' purchases, this will help you promote two high-quality, high profit items in your store: ***Mechanics*** and ***Dalgoda***.

Don't under-order on either bags or comics!

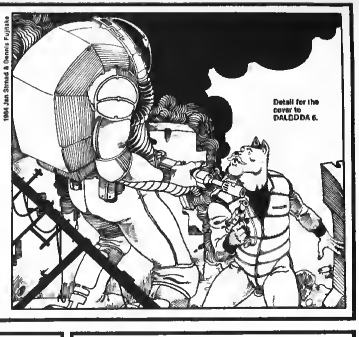
DALGODA Stories Climax: Dalgoda Returns to Canida; "Grimwood" Ends

DALGODA #6: "Dalgoda Come Home, Part Two." Dal and his reluctant crew return to Dal's home planet, and find . . . what? A shocking surprise ending that will spin off the series into an entirely new direction! By JAN STRNAD, OEHNIS FUJITAKE and KEN SMITH.

Also: Grimwood's Daughter reaches a tragic conclusion that brings this back-up series to an end. By JAN STRNAD, KEVIN NOWLAN, and KEN SMITH. (Beginning in ***Dalgoda #7***: A new back up series from one of the hottest stars of the decade—but we can't say any more for now!!)

*NOTE: During the month of May **Dalgoda** will be supported by retailer bag campaign that we expect will reach literally hundreds of thousands of readers. Look at how your back issues are selling out as the popularity of the series grows . . . look at Fantagraphics Books' powerful promotional efforts . . . look at the astonishing production values on recent issues . . . and adjust your order accordingly! You'll be glad you did!*

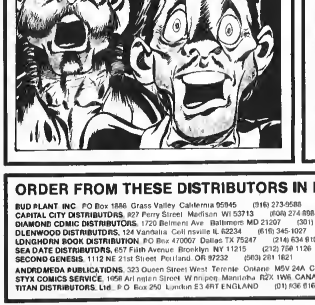
Dalgoda #6. 36 pages. Full color. Published by Fantagraphics Books, Inc. Shipping in May. $2.00. (Canada: $2.50).



New Arrivals in JOURNEY

JOURNEY #20: Introductions are in order as poet Elmer Allyn Kraft and Wolverine MacAllister arrive in New Hope. Meet settlement founder Drummond Wright; see some ice loaded into the Icehouse, and find out why so many pioneer women were burned to death! Written and drawn by WILLIAM MESSNER-LOEBS. Still on white paper!

Journey #20. 36 pages. Published by Fantagraphics Books, Inc. Shipping in early May. $2.00. (Canada: $2.50).



Marvel Double Feature in AH #72-73!

As the summer approaches, Marvel will be releasing a plethora of sure-fire hit titles, and ***AH*** is there to cover them!

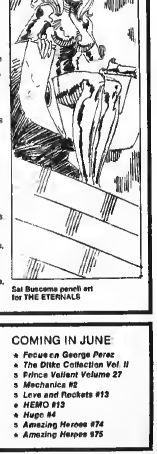
AMAZING HEROES #72. STEVE ENGLEHART returns to Marvel superheroes in a big way with his two interlwined series, ***Hawkeye and the West Coast Avengers*** and ***Vision/Scarlet Witch***—and ***AH*** is there to grill him on the subject! Special cover by ***Vision/Scarlet Witch*** star artist RICHARD HOWELL!

AMAZING HEROES #73. JACK KIRBY's ***Eternals*** was one of the most different series of the '70s. Now it's being revived by PETER GILLIS, SAL BUSCEMA, and AL GORDON, and ***AH***'s PETER SANDERSON is there to cover it! With a new cover by BUSCEMA and GORDON!

Both issues feature the Golden Age Directory (concluding in ***#73***), superhero histories, news, reviews, letters, and more.

Amazing Heroes #72. 68 pages. Published by Fantagraphics Books, Inc. Shipping is early May. $1.95. (Canada: $2.50).

Amazing Heroes #73. 58 pages. Published by Fantagraphics Books, Inc. Shipping is late May. $1.95. (Canada: $2.50).



Sal Buscema pencil art for THE ETERNALS

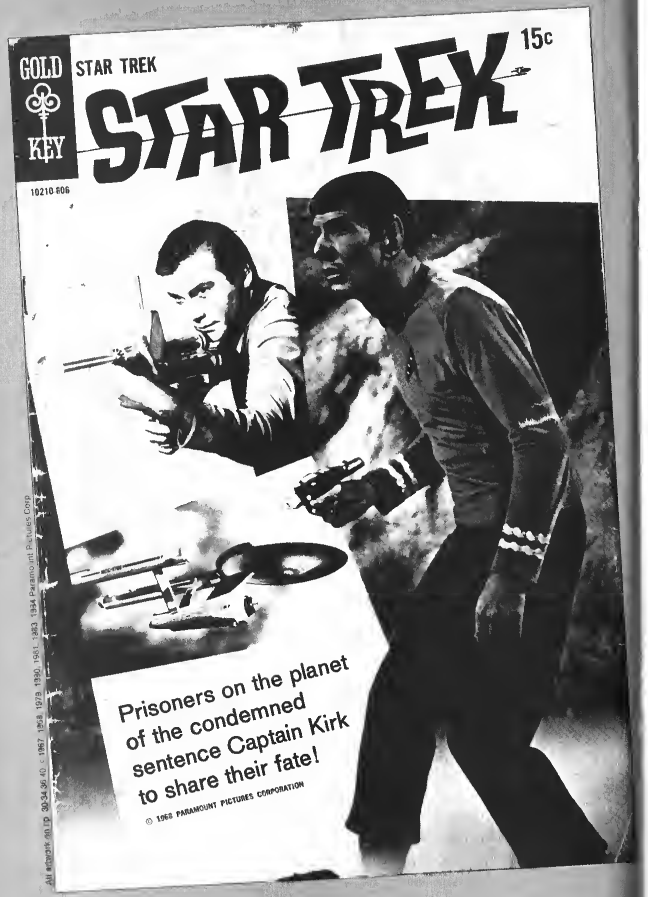
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- *Hugo #4*
- *Amazing Heroes #74*
- *Amazing Heroes #75*



THIRD TIME LUCKY

STAR TREK in the comic books.



Gold Key, Marvel, DC—They've all had their shot at adapting the best science fiction TV series of all. WALTER IRWIN takes a look at how they stack up.

The adaptation of a movie or television series into comic book form is, at best, a difficult process. The special language of film, with its unique blend of graphic illustration, individual nuance and story-telling shorthand, brings continuing characters to life in a manner which is extremely difficult to duplicate or even approximate in the comics medium. This is especially true in the case of *Star Trek*.

The problem seems to be that the series is just too popular; just about everyone knows what form the characters and situations will take, and any variance from that individualistic television style seems somehow to fall flat.

The biggest problem for the comic book writers is, of course, the creation of believable actions, attitudes and dialogue for the main characters. We know how Kirk, Spock, McCoy and the rest talk, respond, think. And if any of these seems the least little bit wrong, then the story just doesn't work. Because *Star Trek*'s "world" is so well known, the author (and the artist) has the additional problem of maintaining consistency in supporting characters, technical jargon, the series "history," and so on.

From the artistic standpoint, there is the chore of having to constantly make sure the character renderings match up with the real actors. It is also difficult for the comic book creators to duplicate the special effects and high-tech hardware so essential to the series' "look." The world of *Star Trek* in the comics always seems, somehow, to be a dark, cramped place. Also, there are just not many artists who can draw aliens that look both original and authentic. (Nor, to be fair, are there many writers who can create fresh or believable aliens.)

From the problems and restrictions listed above, it would seem that it would be nearly impossible for any creative team to do a successful *Star Trek* comic book. Until the appearance in 1982 of DC's *Star Trek* series, this was true.

GOLD KEY

The first *Star Trek* comic series appeared in 1967 (cover dated October), about ten months after the debut of the television series. This was about average for the time: comic book companies usually waited to see if the series was going to be a success before pouring money into an adaptation. The publisher was Gold Key, the only company then regularly doing movie and TV adaptations. To the people at Gold Key, the adaptation process was simple: buy the property, commission the writing and drawing of a story, and depend on the name to sell the book. A fairly simple process and one which has accounted for many fine adaptations over the years. But when the writing and drawing are done without the necessary research, you end up with a bad adaptation. And, it follows, a very bad comic book.

Research for Gold Key's version of *Star Trek* seems to have been little more than the reading of some brief character outlines and a look at a few publicity stills. When reading the earliest issues, it is impossible to tell whether or not the creative teams had even seen the show. In the case of at least one of the later artists, it was doubtful.

Nevio Zaccara drew the first two issues of the comic; later issues were drawn by A. McWilliams and Alberto Giolitti. Giolitti lives and works in Rome, so it was highly unlikely that he ever saw the series while he was working on the book.

My research has failed to turn up a reliable source for the name of the writer(s) of the Gold Key series, and I'm understandably loath to attribute such poor work to anyone on hearsay.

The main reason for the poor quality of research and preparation probably lies with Gold Key's system of producing comic adaptations of movies and television series over the years. It is just that, in *Star Trek*, Gold Key had hold of something more complex and more cared-about than their usual product. Their main failure was not realizing this fact and acting upon it.

(EDITOR'S NOTE: You also must wonder how much cooperation Gold Key got from Paramount Television, which produced the show. Lack of help from movie and television companies is often at fault as much as the comic companies themselves for bad adaptations.)

Errors abound in the Gold Key issues. The blame must be equally shared by the company, the writer and the artist, although it is likely that the writer lives and works in this country and should have been able to at least watch the show once in a while. However, many of the errors (but by no means all) would only be noticeable or disturbing to a *Star Trek* fan; many comic book adaptations have been successful, even in a series, without being mirror images of the originals. What the Gold Key *Star Trek* comic books lacked was good and entertaining storylines and art. The Gold Key series simply failed to capture any of the spirit of the series or what it was trying to say.



Gold Key's STAR TREK must be counted a failure. Can you see the three errors in this panel? (Answers on page 40.) From STAR TREK #2.

The adaptation became space opera of the simplest kind, unabashedly aimed at a juvenile audience.

The cover of the first issue was a dull mish-mash of stills from the show, capped by an unimpressive logo. The featured story, "Planet of No Return," was a variation on the "bug eyed monster" theme involving giant carnivorous plants. The standard overworked elements of cheap science fiction present in force, including the capture of Yeoman Janice Rand by the plant creatures (rape did not seem to be out of the question). Kirk's characterization was incredibly stupid and dull. It could've made a perfect '50s bad horror movie. Unfortunately, both cover and story set the style for the following issues.

The second issue did not appear until some eight months later, although it appeared to have been prepared at the same time as #1. This would suggest that Gold Key was taking no chances. *Star Trek* had not been a runaway hit, and it is likely the comics company waited until the show was scheduled for a second season before continuing with the series. The next three issues appeared at approximately six month intervals, and it was not until about #5 that *Star Trek* was added to Gold Key's regular schedule. Even then, the book appeared sporadically.

"The Devil's Island of Space," the second entry in Gold Key's series, revolves about one of the oldest science fiction plot devices extant. "They Are Not What They Seem." This device was destined to become a staple of stories to follow. Kirk and his "boys" (he called them that throughout the story) beamed down to a strange asteroid where the inhabitants claimed to be shipwrecked. But it was soon revealed that they were condemned criminals, and the asteroid was about to be blown up to execute them. A highlight of this tale is Spock joshing with Kirk.

Each of the Gold Key *Star Trek* comics was a variation on a classic science fiction theme, and usually a not too imaginative variation at that. "Invasion of the City Builders," in issue #3, retells the horror that occurs when machines overrun their creators. Although this was one of *Star Trek*'s favorite themes, in the hands of Gold Key's people, it degenerated into a simple "chase" story, with the *Enterprise* crew trying to find a way to stop the rampaging building machines before they paved over the "last remaining ten thousand acres" of planet Questionmark.

In the middle of this silliness is a nice bit of characterization of the alien leader, who feels that his authority if being undermined by the saviors from the starship. This kind of subtle touch was rare in the series.

By the time the fourth issue rolled around, it appeared that some fan feedback (or at least some pressure from Paramount) was being felt, for it prominently featured Spock, both on the cover and in the story. From then on, the Vulcan was featured as a full partner to Kirk, and handled just about as much action and dialogue. This same thing had happened on the television series some time earlier.

The following issues were no better and no worse. Gold Key apparently was satisfied with sales and Paramount apparently never objected to the product. It must be remembered that such things as comic book adaptations were taken even less seriously 20 years ago than they are now; it is likely that no one at Paramount, outside of the legal department, ever as much as saw the comic books. Throughout the entire 61-issue run of Gold Key's series, the stories and art remained on a level well below that acceptable to most comic or *Star Trek* fans.

The splash page of issue #6 featured a shot of meteors penetrating the hull of the *Enterprise*. Luckily, no one died when all of the air escaped from the ship. This issue also presented a cutaway view of the *Enterprise*, which, to judge by this drawing, would be about the size of a 747 jumbo jet and able to hold about 40 people.

In the seventh issue, entitled "The Voodoo Planet," the crew found a planet which was exact replica of Earth, except that everything was made of paper mache. It was the work of one Count Dressler, who used the replicas to perform a kind of grandiose voodoo: he destroyed the paper mache Eiffel Tower, and the real one on Earth was destroyed. He was defeated when Spock revealed that Vulcans also knew the arcane arts—Spock then performed Vulcan voodoo and did in the voodoo man.

This story is typical of the cursory treatment which *Star Trek* was given in the Gold Key series. Aside from the patent foolishness of reconstructing all of the buildings, etc. of an entire planet in paper mache, the scenes of 23rd century Earth were very contemporary, certainly no later than the 1990s. Add to this the spectacle of Spock researching through ancient Vulcan textbooks for references to his ancestors' voodoo practices, and then synthesizing a serum to give himself and Kirk "voodoo powers," and you have a perfect example of a story ground out without any regard or affection for the original.

This first series of *Star Trek* comics must be counted a failure, fit only for children and rabid completists. Even so, early issues command a surprisingly high price on the collector's market. If you feel you must read some of these stories, it only for a good laugh, you'd be better advised to pick up some of the later issues. The quality of the writing is about the same (often the artwork is much better), and they are fairly abundant.

The best place to read the *Star Trek* back issues is in the treasury volumes. Gold Key (through their Golden Press division) issued four thick volumes entitled "The Enterprise Logs" in 1976-77. These volumes reprint 36 of the first 38 of the stories in chronological order. These "Logs" can readily be found today, and are relatively inexpensive.

Gold Key published its final issue in the series in 1979. Throughout the final two years or so that Gold Key held the rights there were constant reports that Marvel, DC, or even the then still-operative Charlton had purchased the rights. Fans, disgusted with the low quality of Gold Key's product, crossed their fingers with every rumor.

MARVEL COMICS

Finally, in late 1979, it was announced that Marvel Comics had obtained the rights to *Star Trek* and would begin producing a regular series concurrent with the release of *Star Trek: The Motion Picture*. Fans were overjoyed. Even before the creative team was announced, Marvel promised that the series would be faithful to both the forthcoming movie and the television series. As a rousing kickoff to the series, Marvel would also produce an adaptation of the movie, to be featured in a *Marvel Super Special*, an oversized magazine on quality paper. This same adaptation would also be spread over the first three issues of the new series.

Star Trek was placed on the Marvel schedule as a monthly title. This reflected the confidence which Marvel had in the property, and one can hardly blame them for it. Not only was *Star Trek* a favorite with comics fans, Marvel not unreasonably expected to pick up a large number of the legion of "Trekkies," many of whom did not read comic books at all. Marvel was reportedly paying a high fee for the rights (some reports say it was considerably more than they were paying for the rights to *Star Wars*), but the expected increase in sales would more than make up for the expense. Also, *Star Trek* was a prestige property for the company to have, "proof" that even Paramount Pictures and Gene Roddenberry considered Marvel to be Number One.

The script for the adaptation of *Star Trek: The Motion Picture* was done by Marv Wolfman, who would also be serving as editor of the title. Artwork was by fan favorite Dave Cockrum, with inks by the then-prolific Klaus Janson.

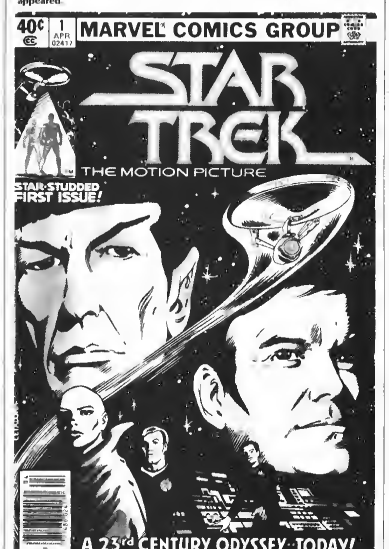
Star Trek: The Motion Picture proved to be less than enthralling, and the static quality of the film made for a comics adaptation which moved at a snail's pace. Wolfman's script, which included much dialogue excised from the final release print of the film—some of the best lines were cut; one wonders what Paramount was thinking, of—was as fluid as the adaptation process would allow. Cockrum's art, however, was wildly uneven. Characters were almost totally unrecognizable in one panel, beautifully rendered in the very next. Page design varied between everything from standard six or eight-up rectangular layout to double-page spreads with multiple inserts. Most irritatingly, the art was muddy because of overuse of blacks and lousy reproduction, even in the slick-paper *Super Special* edition.

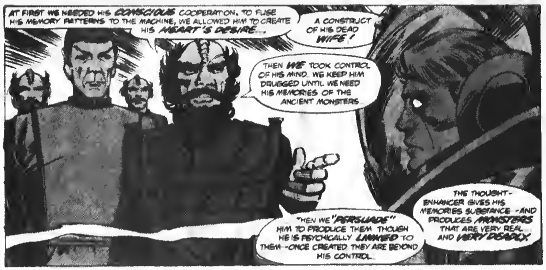
(Sloppy reproduction and dark, over-inked artwork continued to plague the series throughout its run, and contributed immeasurably to the disdain in which fans held the book. One of the things for which *Star Trek* was famous was its bright, open look, especially on the *Enterprise*, and the comic book made everything look dark, dank, and cramped.)

One gets the feeling that Marvel's people weren't really all that thrilled with the idea of adapting the movie, for the end result had a distinctly rushed and perfunctory look to it. (To be fair, it must be remembered that Paramount, because of in-house delays, was late in delivering scripts and stills to Marvel.) Perhaps everyone was looking forward to doing original stories with the beloved characters, considering the adaptation just a necessary chore to get out of the way before the fun began.

The first all-new issue was #4.

Marvel's STAR TREK engendered high hopes among fans . . . until the first issue appeared.





The scourge of Marvel's STAR TREK! Hackneyed plots, with monsters, ghosts, and an unhealthy dose of pseudo-SF. (From the fifth issue.)

cover dated July 1980. As if the previously-published and overly-long adaptation of the movie hadn't given the book a slow enough start, the series opened with a two part story, "The Haunting of Thallus" (continued in #5, Aug. 1980, "The Haunting of the Enterprise"). It is difficult to understand why an editorial decision was made to use a two part story directly after the three-part movie adaptation; perhaps Wolfman and company felt that comics fans would not respond well to a book which did not utilize continued stories.

Wolfman and Cockrum/Janson were the creative team with Mike Barr taking over the scripting on issue five. Even though the team had not yet found their footing with the series, this two-parter set the tone for all the issues to follow. Monsters, ghosts, and an unhealthy dose of pseudo-science fiction.

The *Enterprise* assigned to transport a dangerous alien prisoner back to the jail from which he had escaped, encountered a "haunted house" floating around in space. Investigating, the crewmen were beset by the appearance of nearly invulnerable monsters (including the Frankenstein monster, vampire bats, werewolves and the Official Marvel Version of Dracula). A beautiful young woman was found in the gothic manse and rescued. All of these, including the woman were proven to be the result of a new Klingon weapon (oh, did I forget to mention they showed up, too?) which could form corporeal monsters from the thoughts of a humanoid. The Klingons had captured a Starfleet scientist, attached him to their device, then used his subconscious memories to form monsters with which to attack the *Enterprise*. The alien prisoner, thanks to a surgical implant, was a "receptor" for these images. The mysterious woman had been the first construct of the device; the Klingons had allowed the young man to form an image of his "heart's desire," his late wife, in order to more easily subvert his will. All this information was glibly explained to Spock when captured by the Klingons; he then made use of this largesse by mind melding with the scientist, causing him to transmit an image of Spock, and informing Kirk to "destroy" the woman. Kirk did, and the psychic feedback caused the scientist to turn his creations upon the Klingons.

It doesn't make a heck of a lot more sense in the reading that it does in the telling, folks. The story was obviously padded to two issue length, and characterization was lost in the never-ending battle against the monsters. The Klingons in particular were badly handled, gloating, gnashing their teeth, and spilling their plans and schemes to Spock in tried and true Marvel super-villain fashion. Also hampering the story was the use of several all too well known *Star Trek* cliches, such as the mind meld, a secret weapon, and the warp drive malfunctioning at a crucial point. It was a disappointing effort. The series was now five issues old and had yet to produce a really good *Star Trek* story. Fans were beginning to get edgy and somewhat pessimistic.

The sixth issue presented a tale (again by Barr, Cockrum and Janson) entitled "The Enterprise Murder Case." This was a little more like what readers expected. Spock made use of his intellectual and deductive abilities (at one point he refers to Sherlock Holmes), the crew donned cheesy disguises to visit the surface, and the events of the story were the result of actions taken by Kirk years before. Particularly welcome was the lack of superheroish action. Although this issue was not classic *Star Trek*, it was at least a step in the right direction. Readers could begin to hope.

The first really *alien* aliens appeared in issue #7, produced by a new creative team: Tom DeFalco writing and Mike Nasser drawing. (The continuing presence of Klaus Janson as inker provided a consistent look). The story was again nothing special (Marvel was showing a distinct tendency toward taking elements from two or three *Star Trek* television episodes and mixing them together), but it was at least an attempt at science fiction. Certain members of an alien race, rather than dying evolve upwards along the evolutionary scale. The effects of this on the society are, understandably, far reaching, and not all beneficial.

The Marvel *Star Trek* series how seemed to be approaching the kind of stories the TV series did so well. Unfortunately, with the next issue, Marvel proved that they could also do the kind of stories which the TV series did badly.

New scripter Marty Pasko was rejoined by Dave Cockrum (now inked by Ricardo Villamonte) for "The Expansionist Syndrome," a simpleminded robots versus humans story ("mechs" vs.

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Gil Kane did manage to produce an Enterprise interior which at least looked as bright and airy as that on film.

"or's"). The biggest flaw in this story was a subplot involving a young woman who was being ferried by the *Enterprise* to a Starbase for a heart transplant (Marvel's series saw the ship assigned to some rather humdrum duties). Feeling she was needed to help overcome the aliens she leaped from her bed, knocked out Dr. Chapel, and escaped at phaser-point. (She wasn't the superwoman she seemed—immediately upon reporting to Kirk how to solve the crisis, she swooned prettily into his arms.) Luckily, the "mechs" proved to be pretty nice guys after all, and they whipped up a shiny new mechanical heart for the plucky lady.

This silliness was immediately followed by—more ghosts. Pasko and Cockrum, now accompanied by Frank Springer on inks, this time pulled a switch: these ghosts were *real*. Kind of. They were the surviving consciousnesses of victims of early transporter experiments, seeking vengeance upon the women who had caused their deaths, Janice Hester (I). They were attracted to the *Enterprise* by the presence of her granddaughter, one Karen Hester, who was enough of a double for her granny to fool the not overly bright ghosts. A boring and predictable subplot involving Karen's former involvement with Kirk made the issue even less appealing.

By this time, the hopes aroused in fans for a successful series by issues #6 and #7 were almost completely destroyed. Not only had the book slipped back into mediocrity, but Marvel seemed to be less and less committed to it. The creative teams kept changing, and editorial direction (now under Louise Jones) seemed to be nonexistent. The series had no point of view and no internal consistency beyond the stock *Star Trek* characters and situations.

Perhaps the death knell for the series (from the standpoint of both the fans and Marvel) was sounded in January, 1981, with the cover of issue #10. Above a drawing of our favorite Vulcan brandishing a spear over a fallen alien opponent, a blurb shouted, "Spock—The Barbarian!" Michael Fleisher and Leo Duranona were responsible for this travesty, although the story inside proved to be little more than your stock capture and bondage shtick.

But that cover, and all that it represented, was enough for most readers. The "Trekkies" had probably long since quit buying the comic anyway, but the sheer crassness and so-what attitude which Marvel now displayed caused all but the most fanatic readers to drop the comic from their buying lists.

Nothing changed throughout the rest of the series except the creative teams. Pasko wrote the majority of the remaining issues, with assists by Alan Brennert (#12), Carr (#17), and J.M. DeMatteis (#16). Artistic teams changed more often: Joe Brozowski and Tom Palmer (#11, 13), Brozowski and Sal Trapani (#18), Luke McDonnell and Palmer (#12), McDonnell and Gene Day (#14, 16), Ed Hannigan and Palmer (#17), and, somewhat surprisingly, Gil Kane on #15. Unfortunately, even Kane's fine inks were muddied up by poor reproduction, although he did manage to produce an *Enterprise* interior which at least looked as bright and airy as that on film.

The remaining issues—the series was cancelled by Marvel with #18, having previously gone to bi-monthly with #15—never rose above the level of mediocrity set by #10. Only occasionally did anything of interest occur. The revelation in #12 that Yeoman Rand had married a formless alien intelligence (Kirk's amazed "It—I mean, he—*talks?*" has to be an all-time low for that character), the introduction of McCoy's daughter, Joanna, in #13, along with the news that she was engaged to a Vulcan (!); the sight of a little alien girl witnessing the transporter arrival of Kirk and company in #17 and thinking them to be "angels." These moments were few and far between, however, and the series ground its torturous way to a halt with #18, cover dated February, 1982. (In typical Marvel bravura fashion, the cover proclaimed, "Special Last Issue Collector's Item!" It's doubtful if anyone cared.)

The mistakes which Marvel made with its *Star Trek* series are almost too numerous to list. First and foremost among them, however, is the fact that the constant turnover of artists and writers never allowed the series to gain any kind of consistency, much less a fan following. Too, Marvel's adaptations consistently failed to capture either the feel or the intent of the television series (which was, *Star Trek: The Motion Picture* notwithstanding, what readers wanted to see), nor were the characters ever handled in a believable or consistent fashion.

Most importantly, Marvel never made a serious attempt to do science fiction in the *Star Trek* series. Although superheroics were held to an absolute minimum, the creators seemed to never be able to forget that they were doing a comic book. The physiques of the men (and women) were beyond superhero standard, dialogue was just as flippant, stilted and redundant as a typical issue of, say, *Spider-Man*, and at least one fight scene per issue seemed to be a requirement. Real science fiction was most often discarded in favor of melodrama, in which ideas took second place to battles against monsters, machines or all-too-humanoid aliens.

The Marvel *Star Trek* series was a failure, and all the more disappointing because it was not an impressive failure. Science fiction has always been difficult to sell in comics, but if Marvel had chosen to go all out with *Star Trek*, breaking new ground and striving to capture the spirit and tone of the televised series, then fans of every stripe would have applauded. If sales had still not been good enough for the book to survive, so be it.

Marvel, however, apparently decided to aim the book at the lowest common denominator. Occasional posturing and posing aside, the series never began to approach any issues of substance—bug-eyed monsters, ghosts, gnomes, robots and the occasional Klingon were deemed suitable enough opponents; one could hear the editors warning that ideas don't sell comics.

Back issues of the Marvel *Star Trek* comics can be found in plentiful numbers, and at extremely reasonable—even cheap—prices. (Many dealers simply put everything other than the first and second issues in the 25¢ bargain boxes). Because it was in magazine format, the Marvel Super Special which adapted *Star Trek: The Motion Picture* may be a little more difficult to find, and consequently cost a bit more. From the standpoint of a *Star Trek* fan, however, the Marvel series is not nearly as collectable as are the Gold Key issues. And Marvel fans generally ignore them because they are not superhero comics.



Marvel's STAR TREK was a failure, and all the more disappointing because it wasn't an impressive failure. (From the penultimate issue, #17.)

DC COMICS

Marvel Comics obviously never knew what it was doing with *Star Trek*, and fans were beginning to suspect that no comics company ever would. So it was with an overwhelming sense of ennui that fans learned that DC would begin publishing *Star Trek*. (Revived interest in the series by comics companies was due to the success of the second *Star Trek* film, *The Wrath of Khan*). Even more distressing fans was the announcement that the creative team for the new series would be Marv Wolfman and Mike Barr, as editor and writer respectively. Both men had been associated with Marvel's series, and putting them in charge of the new effort seemed suicidal. Even the announcement that Tom Sutton would be the artist did not excite anyone, for his style, while distinctive, was of the same darkly-inked school as Cockrum's and Palmer's. It seemed as if nothing would be different except the name of the company publishing the book.

However, at Wolfman's urging, the contract that DC negotiated with Paramount allowed for the use of all the characters and situations from the series and films. Fans

DC's STAR TREK: The most consistently artistically successful and entertaining.







DC's STAR TREK skillfully uses established characters and history—and duplicates the series' dialogue (From #4.)

knew that this one factor alone, if used properly, could make all the difference. Wolfman's idea, however, was to go one step farther, to use the best of both worlds. As he told Barr, "Don't be bound by the television format. Take the characters, the concepts, the universe, but do comic book stories, with comic book pacing, sub-plots, even continued stories."

Barr took him at his word, and the series opened this time with a four-part story packed with characters and situations culled from the series. (Actually, the storyline falls naturally into two parts of two issues each essentially forming two interconnected stories.) The villains of the story were Klingons (again, as in the Marvel series, drawn in their horn-headed incarnation introduced in *Star Trek: The Motion Picture*). Among them were our old friends Captain Koloth and Admiral (Captain) Kor, as well as a new character, Konom, a Klingon Pacifist. Subsequent issues brought back the Organians, and the rock-like Excalvians.

The involved plotline opened with the Klingons building a massive space station in "worm-hole space." With the assistance of Konom, the *Enterprise* crew destroyed it, only to find that their actions have caused the Klingon Empire to declare war on the Federation. Checking in with headquarters, Kirk found to his dismay that the commander of Starfleet was just as anxious to fight as the Klingons. Suspecting outside influences, Kirk went to Organia for help, only to find it blocked off by the Excalbians. The Excalbians had caused the war to again test the relative strength of good vs. evil. Kirk, working in concert with Admiral Kor, managed to free the Organians, then convinces the Excalbians to test their theories first-hand by fighting the equally-powerful Organians. The challenge was accepted, and the two races vanished into limbo, bringing an end to the war, and leaving the Klingons and the Federation with the need to negotiate their own peace treaty.

The story proved pleasing to *Star Trek* fans, mainly because of the skillful use of established characters and history. There are several gaping plot holes—why would Kirk intentionally set off a war which could easily devastate the galaxy?—but all-in-all it was a very successful first effort.

The subplots which Wolfman requested were present in force. Konom, of course, remained as a continuing character, and gained a love interest in the person of Ensign Nancy Bryce. Bryce, in turn, is constantly at odds with Lieutenant Bearclaw, who blames both her father and the Klingons for his father's death. Needless to say, he isn't very fond of Konom. These characters are fairly well-rounded, and have been used rather effectively as part of the supporting cast through the first half dozen issues.

Other still developing subplots include Kirk's reluctance to accept Saavik as a replacement for Spock (now effectively "moot), Sulu's resentment at not receiving his own command, and Kirk's gradually increasing impatience with and repugnance for violence. Because of the necessity to set up the adaptation of the third movie between issues #7 and 8, all of these subplots are only just now being developed. It is obvious, however, that Barr plans to expand upon all of them in future issues.

Wolfman and Barr obviously realized that it would be a mistake to have every issue of the series be continued, comic book "style" or not, so the next two issues featured self-contained stories. The presence of the continuing subplots and the new crewmembers provided a feeling of continuity to the fledgling series which the Marvel series never achieved.

Issue#5 featured pretty standard "violation of the prime directive" stuff—A marooned Captain, thought to be a god by native aliens, used his phaser and advanced knowledge to end a war, heal the sick, etc. When Kirk and co. arrived, he naturally refused to leave; they couldn't take him because it would have meant fighting the populace.

Events worked themselves out of course, but in this story we see a perfect example of the kind of faulty thinking which mars most comic book writing, be it science fiction or not.

Why, when the renegade captain refused to leave, didn't Kirk just return to the *Enterprise*, order Scotty to zero in on his one-of-a-kind readings, and beam him aboard? Never mind that perhaps Mike Barr never thought of this; it is something which has occurred so many times in the series (and in Barr's own *Star Trek* comics) as to be a cliche. Even the most casual *Star Trek* fan would think of it. It is this kind of mistake—which often can be taken care of with a line or two of dialogue—which ruined Marvel's adaptation. Barr has avoided such gaffes most of the time, but he and editor Wolfman must realize that only by remaining diligent and taking the time to read and re-read the story from the reader's viewpoint can such errors and omissions be caught.

Issue #5 featured the return of



Ambassador Fox in a story which told of the efforts of a terrorist group called "The Orion Victory League" to disrupt the Federation/Klingon peace conference. It turned out that the shape-changing agent was in reality Fox's estranged daughter. Barr makes the most of the fact that a man whose words have ended wars cannot talk to his own child, and rightly ends the situation ambivalently, if optimistically. Notable in this issue was McCoy's use of Kirk's allergy to Retinax 5 as a bluff, cleverly utilizing information from *Wrath of Khan*.

Issues #7 and 8 (the ones interrupted by the *DC Movie Special* Adaptation of *The Search for Spock*) relate the history of Lt. Saavik.

Finding herself entering into *pon farr*, Saavik told Kirk and McCoy of her background—found by Spock, taken to his family, matched to a male Vulcan child, Xon. Barr took no chances here... Most of his "past" for Saavik has long been taken for granted as a "given" in fan circles. The only new thing he added was the bonding with Xon, but as this is described as "imperfect," it can easily be dumped if plotlines require.

The story itself is a little awkward in construction, as it necessarily leads into the *The Search for Spock* adaptation. Actually, nothing much in the way of action happens until the second part of the story, when it's discovered that the Romulans have developed a way to control the god-like powers granted by the energy barrier at the edge of the galaxy. Xon, whom a feverish Saavik had rushed off in search of, was undercover among the Romulans. Kirk rescued the pair, and tracked the Romulan vessel into entering the energy zone, where it would "wander helplessly . . . forever lost." (Don't bet on it, Doctor Doom fans).

Although we were introduced to Saavik's betrothed and given a little of her background, nothing had really changed at issue's end. Better not to play with the characters at all than to have them go through typical DC/Marvel "appearance of change." The creators would be better advised to concentrate their efforts on the excellent supporting cast, or, if they/feel readers demand some development in the main cast, do the kind of thing Barr is doing with Kirk: A gradual, developing shift in attitude that will

A dramatic and emotional scene from STAR TREK #6.







Saavik and her betrothed Xon from #8. Possibly just "the appearance of change," but entertaining

not result in the person becoming too different, but will still affect the way he thinks and acts. Conversely, these new attitudes can and should be discarded or tempered when necessary, as in real life. This would be true characterization, of an even richer and more appealing kind than the series gave us. It must be done slowly and logically, however, and from all indications, Barr is doing so.

Tom Sutton has drawn all but one issue (#7) of the entire series, and has done an excellent job. He has managed to walk the thin line between photographic reproduction and "comic book art," giving us representations of the main characters which look very much like their real-life counterparts, yet have a full range of emotion without a stiff, posed look.

The regular inker is Ricardo Villagran, and he has done a splendid job by removing much of the clutter from Sutton's art. His extremely varied linework have given the book a distinctive look all its own, and he is a valued part of the creative team.

Sutton's art is an acquired taste, and it's a well-known fact that many readers never seem to acquire it. His layouts and pacing are always interesting, however, if occasionally a bit confusing or forcing a word balloon to be awkwardly placed, and his visualizations of hardware, ships, aliens, and landscapes are always imaginative and fairly logical. He's obviously done his homework, and the care and attention shows.

Because the *Star Trek* series must, if it is to succeed, attract those who don't normally read comic books, the covers are even more important here than on regular comic books. Aside from an unduly cluttered cover on the first issue, Sutton's covers have been crisp and appealing and getting progressively better. But the best cover work on the DC *Star Trek* series—indeed, the best cover work of *any Star Trek* comic from any company—is on the *DC Movie Special* adaptation of *Star Trek III: The Search for Spock*. It is a beautiful pen and wash by Howard Chaykin, featuring Kirk, Kruge and Saavik standing against a background of ships, the Genesis Planet and a large profile of Spock. Hopefully, this cover helped the issue to sell even better than expected. More attention needs to be paid to cover art on *all* comic, not just *Star Trek*, and increased sales is the surest way to gain that attention.

DC's *Star Trek* series is still feeling its way—a slight revamping is promised with the return of Spock; "new frontiers," Barr terms it—but things probably will not change very much as long as the present creative team stays on the book. So far, Wolfman, Barr, Sutton, and Villigran have given us the most consistently entertaining and artistically successful *Star Trek* series ever. With continued reader support, the voyages of the Starship *Enterprise* should continue to flow from the DC offices for quite some time to come.

CONCLUSION

As stated at the beginning of this article, adapting a television show to comics form is an extremely difficult and demanding job. In the case of *Star Trek*, only one of three tries has proven successful. The first, Gold Key, failed because the creators cared little about the original series and did not even bother to check out the most basic facts. The second, Marvel, failed (even though the creators were originally enthusiastic) because it relied too much on the use of hackneyed plots and monsters-as-villains, as well as slipshod reproduction of halfhearted art. The third, DC, is so far successful because the creators have successfully merged tried-and-true comic book style and writing with well-known *Star Trek* situations and characters.

Perhaps the world will never see a perfect *Star Trek* comic book—perhaps such a thing is impossible—but DC is putting out a good product which will be more than acceptable to even the most hard-core *Star Trek* fan. The series performs the most necessary and important function of a comic book—it is entertaining. And when you get right down to it, be you comics fan, *Star Trek* fan, or both, isn't that what it's all about? ●

This is WALTER IRWIN*'s first article for* AMAZING HEROES

(The three errors in the panel on page 32 are: (1) "Phenomenon" is misspelled; (2) "Unexplainable" is used where "unexplained" is meant; and (3) Spock always calls Kirk "Captain," or "Jim," never "Captain Kirk.")



CHECKING IN

By GIL JORDAN



Neal And Kris Adams

Neal Adams's Continuity Publishing had hardly left the starting gate before it ran into some rough weather. The slow death of Pacific Comics, Continuity's collaborator in publication, promotion, and distribution, gave a swift kick in the teeth to the promised bi-monthly schedule of Continuity's luxurious flag-ship title, Echo of Futurepast, and promised new books such as Zero Patrol and Armor and Silverstreak seemed even less than an echo of the future.

But with Pacific burned, Neal and his daughter and collaborator Kristine have labored long and hard to re-establish Continuity as a force to be reckoned with—and with the publication of Echo of Futurepast #3 and Zero Patrol #1 in January, it seems they're on the road to recovery.

We spoke with Neal and Kris during the last week of January, they explained the problems they had suffered through, and elaborated on their publishing philosophy and plans for the future. —GJ

K: Our first problem was when Pacific went out of business. We were basically packaging and publishing four books, and they were taking care of our separations and printing and distribution. When they went out of business, we had to find our own separator and printer, and do the distribution of our comic line. That was one problem.

The second problem was finding a printer—which we finally did—and getting credit set up with him, which takes about a month to do. Then we got schedules and started rolling.

N: The problems you have with printers are very much like problems that you have with your mother. You don't have a problem until your printer discovers that your sizes are wrong, or your subject matter is wrong, or he's too far away, or you discover he can't ship cheaply, or whatever—and we ran into one of those problems. It wasn't a major problem, but it was an insurmountable problem, so we had to shop for another printer.

Outside of that problem, there was also scheduling problems. He didn't seem to be available to put our stuff on the press when his representative said he was available to put our stuff on the press, which caused at least a month-long delay. So it threw us a month back, even after we had reached general agreement on every aspect of what we were doing.

Now we're with Ronald's in Canada, and they seem to be much more professional . . . much better. We're very happy.



Echo #3 and Zero Patrol #1 are out as of the beginning of January. In February we have Echo #4 and Zero Patrol #2 coming out. This is what Ronald's is promising. They will probably be out by the first week of March; but we're shooting for the last week of February. And our next stuff will be out in April—Echo #5, Zero Patrol #3, and Megalith #1. And as of the books coming out that month, Zero Patrol and Megalith become $2.00. Echo stays at $2.95.

The general movement of the market [for books of that format] seems to be toward $1.75, but it actually looks like it's moving to $2.00. The question that we had to face was, do we move to $1.75, and then move to $2.00 two or three months later? It's going to seem really silly if we jump from $1.50 to $1.75 and jump immediately to $2.00. So instead, the break will be from a $1.50 to a $2.00 book. The quality of the paper and the quality of the printing justify that completely, outside of the fact that the paper costs are going up. It just seems to be the correct price for the package.

All books coming out now, whether they're weird books like Echo or normal books like Superman, are having problems as far as getting high orders from distributors, no matter what the package is. I've found that if you stand with your package, and impart this to the distributor, your orders will tend to go up. I don't think that Echo was hurt by the cover price. I think that was something that everybody said in the beginning before it came out. But I've been on the phone today with distributors, and hopefully our orders on Echo are going to still be going up. I don't feel that it's hurt in any way.

We're presenting a new face to the readers, and that is that all our books will be high-quality color and high-quality reproduction, on high-quality stock. What we're saying is that comic books ought to be presented this way a little more. To a certain extent that's a new idea, and a new idea meets a certain amount of resistance on the business end, but that is a transient thing if the idea is successful, if the idea is logical.

The other thing is that we have to produce the kind of material that people want to buy. If we produce the kind of thing that people want to buy, then they'll buy it. A lot of times people produce material and think that it's not doing well because the price is too high. And the fact of the matter is that the material just simply isn't good enough. If our material isn't good enough it probably won't do well and if it's good enough it'll do well at whatever the price is. So we're trying to find the price that's correct for our material and hopefully we'll find material that's correct for the marketplace, and if those things turn out to be that way, then I think we'll do all right.

Echo #6 is where we start changing over stories. "Frankenstein" ends in #5, and we're filling in the slot with a story called "AE35".

... Which is a science fiction graphic novel by William Jungkuntz and ...

... and Tim Ryan.

Rendered by Neal Adams. Who ever he is. What else, Kris?

"Torpedo" begins in #6 as well.

The "Torpedo" feature that has been advertised in some magazines, produced by Catalan Publishing in black-and-white, we're doing in color. There are two chapters by Alex Toth, and the rest is by Jordi Bernet.

We have plans for graphic novels. We are in the process of getting prices from printers on Freakshow.

By Berni Wrightson and Bruce Jones.

That will probably be our first work. And then since "Frankenstein" and "Bucky" are at the end of their run in Echo, we'll probably start getting ready to do those as graphic novels.

As a matter of fact, most of the projects we run in Echo of Futurepast will show up again as graphic novels. Because they're generally of the 48-page variety, and that's our graphic novel size.

"Freakshow" has been overseas, in France and in Spain. "Frankenstein/Dracula/Werewolf" has been in France and Spain. "Bucky O'Hare," incredibly enough, will appear in both France and Spain. I think that's it.

It's important to remember that we're a new publisher, and we don't have any incredible plans to take over the universe. We do have plans to try to find the kind of things that we like to see and like to read and put them in comic book form and present them to the public. In the past, we've sold this material overseas through Transcontinuity. Our plan originally was simply to sell it to publishers both overseas and here. But the transient nature of the new publishers here was of such a sort that we have been unable to place our material in places not of our own publishing—which was our first plan, to have other people publish it.

It's not likely that we would then have taken it to Marvel or DC Comics, because of their general policy, and also because Marvel Comics seems to be trying very hard to put an armlock on the whole industry. We don't support that general direction. So what we felt was that the next logical step was to publish our own material—not to do a lot of it, just to do enough of it that as we produce good stuff we would put it out and try to participate in the field in a very positive, and as much as possible, benevolent way. So that people wouldn't think that we were attacking DC or Marvel, or that we were attacking the other publishers, or anything.

We're just so happy to be in the comic book field, to once again be able to have our stuff seen, and the price of it is that we have to publish it ourselves. It wasn't anything that we looked for; it just turned out that way. But since we're doing it, we intend to be publishers of a quality that people will respect and enjoy our material.

That's basically it. We don't have any big plans. We just hope people like what we do. ●



Shaman: a back-up feature debuting in ZERO PATROL #3

NEXT TIME (IN #70):
DENIS KITCHEN

Photo by MIKE CATRON



by WILL JACOBS and GERARD JONES

THE COMIC BOOK HEROES

Chapter Five

The Return Of The Heroes

When the Flash won his own magazine in 1959, Julius Schwartz began to get his first inkling that the world might be ready for super-heroes again. But was this really the reopening of a field that most comic book professionals had dismissed as gone forever, or was the scarlet Speedster's success only a fluke? Five times in the next two years Schwartz would try to answer that question, each time with a modernization of a comic from the Golden Age.

First it was Green Lantern, in a version departing much further from his inspiration than had Flash. He shared with the Golden Age Green Lantern the concept of a normal man armed with a ring capable of performing miracles; in both the old and new versions the ring was driven by the wearer's own will-power and energized by a sort of green railroad lantern. But the old Green Lantern was a semi-mystical character with an ancient magic lantern. The Green Lantern 1959 drew his powers from a lantern-shaped "power battery" entrusted to him by a dying crimefighter from another world (*Showcase* #22, Oct. 1959).

This cosmic Green Lantern, with his nearly omnipotent power-ring, would become Schwartz's mighty hero, his answer to Superman. The very nature of his power would draw him to far planets, the future, and parallel dimensions, leaving the world of Flash and his Rogues far behind.

John Broome was able to draw from a new realm of his imagination in inventing stories for Green Lantern. Foregoing his light-hearted *Flash* style, he dipped into the mysteries of science, space, and time to create menaces that would stretch and challenge the powers of his hero. In Green Lantern's second appearance in *Showcase*, for example, the repressed, destructive side of a scientist's imagination springs to independent life as a faceless man, wreaking destruction with atomic weapons until Green Lantern can exorcise and destroy it (*Showcase* #23, Dec. 1959).

When Green Lantern began in his own magazine in the late spring of 1960 he, and the readers along with him, knew little of his origin and purpose, or the true scope of his powers. Answering the questions surrounding his unique hero in the first nine issues of *Green Lantern* comics, Broome plotted what remains, without question, one of the most impressive multiple-issue sequences in the history of comics.

It begins in issue #1, when Green Lantern's psyche is swept, bodiless, to the distant planet Oa. There we learn that he is only one of a corps of Green Lanterns, each from a different planet, commanded by a race of telepaths called the Guardians of the Universe (*Green Lantern* #1, Aug. 1960). (This was an idea Broome drew directly from his earlier science fiction experience, specifically a story in the Captain Comet series he did for Schwartz in the early 1950s, in which Comet is sworn into the service of the cosmic "Guardians.")

In issues #2, 3, and 4 (Oct. 1960-Feb. 1961) the emerald gladiator tangles with the "weaponers" of the dimension of Qward, where crime is the social norm and those who are "unlawfully honest" are punished.

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From the origin of Green Lantern, as drawn by Gil Kane.

In #6 (June 1961) Green Lantern is summoned by a fellow Green Lantern, a fin-headed, bird-beaked gentleman named Tomar-Re, to a planet of living phantoms. Issue #7 introduces another Green Lanter, the renegade Sinestro, who would become the arch-foe of the Green Lantern of Earth (Aug. 1961).

Issue #9 brings it all to a climax that could put a lump in the throat of a devoted reader. Sinestro teams up with the weaponers of Qward to invade our dimension, and only the combined power of the Guardians and the Green Lantern Corps—replete with intelligent insects, plant-beings, living crystals, and bipedal fish—can defeat them. The battle won, the entire Corps charges its rings together on the mammoth power battery of Oa, in one stunning full-page drawing (Dec. 1961).

These cosmic spectacles were brought to life by the art of another Schwartz veteran, Gil Kane. Kane had come to the Schwartz stable in the early 1950s as a neat but undistinguished penciller, but during the next several years had begun to work out a style of his own. His early Green Lantern drawings were notable for their compelling story-telling and muscular action, though his work generally looked rushed and undeveloped.

Kane's covers, however, showed his potential. His broad, bold layouts always started from the point of view that would give each scene its most dramatic angle. His characters seemed to fly, leap, and stagger right off the covers into the reader's lap. Though he was not yet the artist Infantino was, Kane's steady improvement promised a bright future. When that future was realized, in the mid 1960s, he would change the look of comic art fundamentally.

Just as novel as Green Lantern's cosmic dimension was the nature of his alter-ego, Hal Jordan. Jordan was no mild-mannered reporter, languid playboy, or infuriatingly slow police scientist in the classic DC mold. He was a dashing, handsome test-pilot whose fearlessness had earned him his career as a superhero.

Paramount in Hal's life were his efforts to woo his curvaceous boss, Carol Ferris of the Ferris Aircraft Company. Carol was a typical Schwartz heroine: Emotional but hardheaded, wanting both an ideal man and a successful career. She reacher her most intriguing point in 1962, when a group of inter-dimensional amazons transformed her into the super-villainess Star Sapphire, committed to humiliating Green Lantern and then forcing him to marry her. As she put it, "I seem to be two people. The dominant part of me wants to defeat Green Lantern! The other part wants him to defeat me!!" Only Broome could have slipped such an insight into the mouth of a super-villainess (*Green Lantern* #16, Oct. 1962).

Another unusual supporting character was Hal's loyal "Eskimo resis-monkey" Pieface Kalmaku, the only human to share his secret identity. Many plots were built around Hal retelling his adventures for Pieface's Green Lantern Scrapbook, and the presence of a non-super-powered confidante added an extra dimension to the hero.

But Broome's biggest twist on Green Lantern's alter ego was giving him a second one. When a group of scientists far in the future needed a super-hero, they yanked Green Lantern across the centuries to help them. In transit to 5700 A.D., however, he lost all memory of his own life. The scientists of the future gave him a false memory, an invented identity as asteroid explorer Pol Manning, secretly Green Lantern of the 58th Century, and a love named Iona Vane (*Green Lantern* #8, Oct. 1961). Many times Green Lantern would be pulled to the future, each time to pick up the threads of his second life and continue living where he had left off, before returning to Carol and Pieface and his Hal Jordan identity in the 20th Century.

Such innovations made Green Lantern an instant hit. A straw poll of readers published in Green Lantern #3 showed him to be for the moment DC's most popular hero, with 888 votes to Superman's 900. Flash followed with 521, Batman with 512. Schwartz had scored twice now with his new, improved heroes. It

Green Lantern fights his classic foe Sinestro.





The early Justice League of America: the greatest heroes the world has known.

was time to revive what many considered the greatest Golden Age comic of all.

"Just imagine!" read the ads. "The mightiest heroes of our time have banded together as the Justice League of America to stamp out the forces of evil wherever and whenever they appear! America resounds to the trumpet-like blasts of their names... Superman! Batman! Flash! Green Lantern! Wonder Woman! Aquaman! Manhunter from Mars!"

This successor to the old Justice Society of America was Schwartz's most ambitious project yet. In this team he was entrusted not only with his own two heroes but with five from the stables of other editors: Weisinger's Superman, Robert Kanigher's Wonder Woman, and Schiff's Batman, Aquaman, and Martian Manhunter, to be joined in issue #4 (May 1961) by a fourth Schiff hero, Green Arrow. Only one writer could have been assigned to such a comic: Gardner F. Fox.

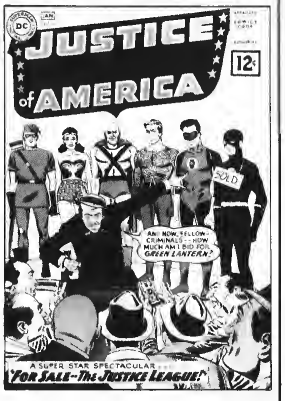
From Fox's imagination in 1939 had sprung the original Flash, Hawkman, the Sandman, Dr. Fate, San Starman, the core of Sheldon Mayer's stable of heroes. Through the 1940s he poured out story after story about these colorful crimefighters, earning him a solid place in Golden Age history. More than anything else, however, his work was distinguished by his 58-page, four-times-a-year tales of his heroes' combined adventures in the Justice Society. Fox invented the idea of a super-hero team, and although the JSA was often copied during the 1940s, it was never equalled.

When Schwartz picked Fox to write the new Justice League, he affirmed the continuity of super-hero comics. It was a thrilling moment for DC's older fans. And there were signs—letters from grateful adults scattered throughout the country—that the number of those fans was steadily growing. With his intelligent sense of fun, Schwartz was beginning to reach an audience who would normally have put comic books behind them. Taste and discrimination had usually been strangers to the world of super-heroes, but now some readers were beginning to apply them to that strange genre of popular entertainment. Gardner Fox made sure that the Justice League would not disappoint them.

Fox had to refine his plotting style for the modern team. Economics had shrunk comics from 58 pages to 24, for one thing, and editorial standards were higher. In the early days of comics the mere idea of odd hero battling odd villain had been enough for most kids, so that a typical story just ran from conflict to conflict on artless enthusiasm. But Schwartz would no longer accept such simplicity. He took to calling himself "S.O. Schwartz" in the 1960s; "S.O." for "Be Original." Originality was the one criterion he demanded of every story by each of his writers.

Fox fell short in the JLA's first ten adventures, which follow a rigid formula carried over from the 1940s. A menace creates disasters in three exotic corners of the world; the JLA splits up into three teams, each of which overcomes its particular challenge; at the end the heroes rejoin to defeat the villain himself. But by the end of 1961 Fox had broken his self-imposed bonds and turned his great imagination to charting unique and devious plots that played endless variations on a single theme, that the heroes must triumph by brain, not brawn. In the typical plot, a baffling mystery con-

DC's specialty: intriguing cover concepts that virtually dared the reader to pick up the comic.





Hawkman and Hawkgirl: a hit with the older readers, but not a commercial success. Maybe it was Kubert's art?

fronts our heroes in the opening pages, in unravelling it they fall prey to some super-scientific or magical schemer and by the last few pages they are caught in a seemingly inescapable plight. Then, just when all seems lost, one hero unveils a brilliant plan—and the villain is undone.

In a classic example of this device, a trio of evil sorcerers has developed a set of spells each perfectly attuned to paralyze a particular Justice League member. There seems to be no way to escape these spells until Aquaman has an inspiration: "Suppose each of us looked like some other member? For instance, I could look like Superman—and Superman could look like me! Then the sorcerers' spells—since they're always directed against individuals—couldn't hurt us!" Green Lantern's power ring performs the camouflage. Ingeniously, the heroes simulate each other's powers—Aquaman, masquerading as Superman, has hidden whales and octopuses destroy a ship while he pretends to destroy it with super-strength—and the deception is maintained until the sorcerers are vanquished (*JLA* #11, May 1962).

Fox's plots always walked a strange line between predictability on the one hand and incoherent anarchy on the other. Perhaps no comic has ever posed as many difficulties to its writer as the JLA, especially in those days when editorial policy did not allow stories to continue from one issue to the next. Fox had to sacrifice characterization almost completely to fit his complex plots into one comic, to the point that the liveliest personality on the team was their stereotypical teen hipster mascot, Snapper Carr. Sometimes the convolutions of the plot seemed arbitrary and the extraordinarily wordy story-telling became cumbersome. But in his best moments, and they were many, Fox made the Justice League the exemplar of how well a comic book can be plotted.

It was also an irresistible title to kids. Not only did it have all our favorite heroes under one cover, but Fox gave his stories so many ingeniously ludicrous quirks that we would gasp and laugh simultaneously. In his mind a carnival fun-house could be the gateway to another world, its concave and convex mirrors actually transforming our heroes into the ridiculous shapes they reflected (*JLA* #7, Nov. 1961). In his mind an ordinary automobile from our science-based universe could be an unstoppable weapon in a universe that runs on the principles of magic, just as a magic spell would be in ours (*JLA* #2, Jan. 1961).

This last story contains a scene that showcases artist Mike Sekowsky's eye for humor. A group of interdimensional thieves are shown loading the goose that lays the golden eggs, the fairy gold that vanishes each dawn, and the sword Excalibur into the trunk of a big yellow Pontiac. Sekowsky's peculiar figures, comical touch, and ability to master difficult problems of layout served him well in the strange world of the JLA. It became a cliche among fans who defended "Big Mike" to praise his skill at cramming a horde of heroes and villains into a single panel. But it was true, and making such busy layouts dynamic was no easy task. More than that, he could take whatever plot intricacies Fox threw at him and give them graphic sense. Sekowsky may never have been pretty, especially with the stiff inking of Bernard Sachs, but he always told one hell of a story.

With the Justice League the Schwartz revival campaign was fully launched. In the next year-and-a-half Gardner Fox would take on three more assignments that, though none were as successful as the first three revivals, would prove beyond a doubt that a good super-hero could not be kept down.

A Fox creation from 1939, Hawkman was a flying hero who wore a massive hawk-mask, talked with birds, and fought modern crime with weapons of the past, including maces, crossbows, and whatever else Fox's research could turn up. The Hawkman of 1961 was a further extension of the theme, a supersci entific humanoid policeman from the planet Thanagar,





The new Flash journeys to a parallel world to meet the old Flash—the classic "Flash of Two Worlds" story.

visiting Earth in order to study our law enforcement methods. He masqueraded as museum curator Carter Hall, a human identity which often led him into cases involving ancient artifacts and lost civilizations. This dual role enabled him to battle crime with the weapons of the past, the detective procedures of the present, and the science of the future. His role as an earthling was made easier by a unique Fox invention: a device called the Absorbascon, which transmitted all earthly knowledge on any given subject telepathically to its user.

Hawkman's most interesting feature, however, was Hawkgirl. His wife, fellow police officer, and associate curator, she was his equal partner in the battle with crime. Fox never even seemed to consider keeping her in the background, as she fought beside her husband with wits and wings and fists, and sometimes when Hawkman was incapacitated, the final victory was hers alone. Hawkgirl, also known as Shiera Hall, joined level-headed Iris West and willful Carol Ferris in the ranks of Schwartz's gutsy professional women. Together, she and Hawkman marked the first married super-heroes in comics.

For many fans they also marked the true return of the Golden Age. The letter page of Hawkman's first appearance—in *The Brave and the Bold*, a former adventure comic converted into a second Showcase (*Brave and Bold* #34, Mar. 1961)—featured a reminiscence of the old Hawkman by Gardner Fox, and a trio of letters from old-time fans ecstatic over rumors of the Winged Wonder's return. All of them were from adults, one of whom was Roy Thomas, soon to be one of the key figures in the birth of organized comic fandom.

Although sparking great enthusiasm among the older set, Hawkman apparently failed to enthrall the children who comprised the bulk of DC's readership. After a three-issue run in *The Brave and the Bold* his sales were not quite adequate to justify his own comic. Schwartz, in his fondness for the character, gave him another three issue try out a year later (*Brave and Bold* #42-44, July-Nov. 1962,) but again sales fell short.

Perhaps the concept of a bird-man wasn't exciting enough in an increasingly technological age, as the strip's second artist, Murphy Anderson, would suggest. Or perhaps his slow start came because he was both blessed and cursed by the art of Joe Kubert. Kubert was a natural choice, having drawn Hawkman in the late 1940s but in the intervening decade he had turned his art away from super-heroes to become DC's principal artist of war and adventure stories. He was not regularly a member of the Schwartz stable, and so did not share the dynamic simplicity of Infantino and Kane. His unique, almost impressionistic use of line and shading baffled many of Schwartz's fans; the question of whether Kubert was right for Hawkman was the first serious issue to rise in DC's letter pages. Most of the older readers answered yes, many younger ones said no, while a few made a finer distinction: Kubert was a superb artist whose style simply wasn't right for the kinds of stories Gardner Fox was telling.

Whatever Schwartz's opinions, when Hawkman and Hawkgirl came back for their third try-out, this time backing up Adam Strange in *Mystery in Space* (from #87, Nov. 1963), they were drawn by the radically different Anderson, and this time the series took.

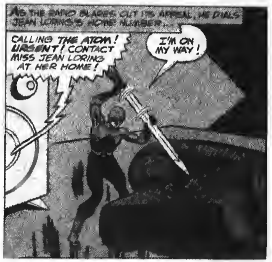
Six months after Hawkman's debut, DC's older fans were given a treat served up especially for them, when Jay Garrick, the original Flash of the 1940s returned. When Schwartz conceived this comeback he had no idea how to make that ten-years-gone hero—about whom Barry Allen had been reading in a comic book in his origin story back in 1956—a real character in his new universe. Fox conquered the problem by imagining a second Earth, existing in the same space as our own but "vibrating at a different speed," with a history closely paralleling ours except for the year in which super-heroes first appeared. There the year was 1938, and the heroes were those of the Golden Age, not 1956 as in our world. When Barry Allen accidentally supervibrated to this Earth II, he found his boyhood comic book hero still living—older, gray at the temples, a little short on stamina, but still living—and still running fast (*Flash* #123, Sept. 1961).

For the older readers, this story, "Flash of Two Worlds," brought the delightful surprise that their old favorites had not been abandoned. But for the younger ones it brought perhaps an even bigger thrill. True, they might not have known that there ever was an earlier Flash, but here was a new world, a world potentially chock-full of new super heroes. And by now it was growing clear that that was what they wanted.

Schwartz and Fox's last revival of that period was a departure, owing less to its Golden Age namesake than any of its predecessors. "big Big BIG NEWS," read the ads, "about a SMALL Small-small super-hero.... The Atom." In the 1940s the Atom had been a minor hero



From the origin of the new Atom.



The early Atom stories were gems of invention and entertainment.

with no super-powers, just a tough scrapper of small stature who seemed to stand in for Everyman in the DC pantheon. In the science-minded atmosphere of 1961, however, the name suggested a completely different type of hero, one who could actually reduce himself in size from six feet to six inches and all the way down to the sub-atomic level.

Research scientist Ray Palmer discovers that he can control his size and mass by bathing himself in the emanations of a white dwarf star. With his "size and weight controls" he finds he can keep his weight at its full 180 pounds even at six inches high, or reduce himself to the weight of a feather. By shrinking himself to the size of an electron he can travel as part of an electronic impulse through telephone wires to any place in the world. He knows immediately that he will use his powers to fight crime, and thanks to the fact that his girlfriend is a lawyer he finds himself contacting a wide spectrum of thieves, hoodlums, and spies from the very beginning (*Showcase* #34, Oct. 1961).

The concept of the Atom set him immediately apart from the rest of the super hero crowd. Where everyone else was bigger, stronger, faster than life, the Atom was smaller, forcing both him and Gardner Fox to rely heavily on their wits. To bring down a thug, for example, the Atom might waft into the air at feather weight, increase his weight suddenly, bounce off a convenient rubber eraser, and then drive his tiny fist into the crook's jaw with his full 140 pounds behind it (*Atom* #4, 1963). Such scenes gave artist Gil Kane an opportunity to show off his growing facility for action, while Murphy Anderson's inking gave the strip a tidy, every-day flavor that accented the charm of the Tiny Titan.

Although never so surprising as the *Justice League*, as grandiose as *Green Lantern*, or as wildly imaginative as *Flash*, the early issues of *The Atom* set a standard for ceaseless invention and variation on the theme of smallness that made them gems of children's entertainment. Fox came up with a Rogue's Gallery of his own for the series, including such gimmick-foes as Dr. Light and Chronos, the Eye-Ware Cat. But the best stories often came with little mysteries, neat as clockwork and surprising as a jack-in-the-box about offbeat court cases (for which Fox's law degree came in very handy) or "impossible" burglaries. He also gave us another tough, charming Schwartz heroine in the person of lady lawyer Jean Loring, and a twist on the usual comic book romance. In this case it is Ray Palmer who proposes marriage every issue, and Jean who puts him off for the sake of her career.

The *Showcase* issues featuring the Atom in 1961 sold well enough to earn him his own title, and the question raised by Flash had been answered. All across America, in drug stores, supermarkets, candy stores, and newsstands, kids were casting their votes with the dimes they dug up from their pockets. They voted yes on super heroes. Now there could be no doubt that the best of them would live again. While just around the corner, as yet unknown to these veterans and followers of the Golden Age, a whole new breed of hero was getting ready to emerge.

WILL JACOBS and GERARD JONES are the authors of The Beaver Papers *(Crown Publishers, 1983) and a slew of parodies for the* National Lampoon. *The preceding chapter is an excerpt from* The Comic Book Heroes, *a massive critical history of American super-hero and adventure comics from 1956 to the present, which Crown will be releasing in the Summer of 1985.*

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DEATH WHERE IS THY STING?

Essay by THOMAS LONG



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The death of comic book heroes has long been a useful and dramatic device that creators implement to climax storylines or start new ones. There have been a handful of significant deaths among the hero population, and in this summary we look at several to find what draws readers to respond to such events and why it takes something so powerful and dramatic to cause a reaction.

Despite the fact that many people think that the death of Phoenix (in the *X-Men*) started the recent trend to realistic death, there were others presented earlier. The most important of these was the death of the Swordsman in the pages of *Giant-Size Avengers*.

Swordsman began his career as a villain and not a very good one. He apparently began to realize his own limitations after several defeats and hung up his sword altogether. Then his life fell apart. He was no longer a circus star, broken and penniless. He found himself in the Far East, drinking heavily, as he continued to spiral downward. Then he met Mantis. From the outset he realized she was something special, and she convinced him to right his life and make something of his talents. To please her, he decided to become a hero and together they travelled to America and petitioned the Avengers for admittance. The Swordsman finally proved himself and his loyalties with the team and found the acceptance he had long sought. But, thanks in part to that special quality he originally sensed in Mantis, events began that would ultimately lead to his death.

The time-master Kang came to the 20th century in search of the woman who would eventually become the Celestial Madonna—the bearer of a child that would someday rule the Universe. He knew only that it was one of the women associated at the time with the Avengers. At the same time, Mantis's own mystery was evolving; she could not piece together her childhood and much of her past and she began to look toward the man machine with whom she could most easily empathize, The Vision. As her affections emerged for The Vision, so did disenchantment with Swordsman. In countless efforts to prove himself to her once again, Swordsman only succeeded in faulting himself further. When Kang finally kidnapped the other Avengers, he mocked the Swordsman and left him behind thinking him to be no real threat.

But the Swordsman traced his team to Eygpt and in the climatic moment, proved his love for Mantis by throwing himself in front of a blast that would have taken her life. Realizing her own emotions, Mantis mourned the death of the man she truly loved.

Even though writer Steve Englehart reanimated the Swordsman a few issues later to conclude the Celestial Madonna episode, his depiction of the death of Swordsman was startling, dramatic, and extremely well played. Englehart set up the circumstances of the fall, rise and subsequent fall again of a man in search of himself to save a woman like Mantis—a woman who spurned and rejected him, but Englehart knew very well the limitations of the characters' love and formed some subtle and moving emotions for characters involved.

The death of the Swordsman's human form was finite, a nearly unheard of practice when it happened in the '70s. It was not a senseless death, but one that made us aware of the dangers of being a hero in a four-color world. In the past, civilian characters (dating all the way back to Spider-Man's uncle Ben) and villains would die, but seldom ever a hero.

Flash forward. The *X-Men* had been reborn in a new series and the once Marvel Girl had become pivotal in recent comics history; and since anyone reading this article will be aware of the circumstances surrounding Jean Grey's "cosmic suicide," the death of the character was not originally planned though it was almost an accident of creation—and most certainly an editorial fluke that was very well documented.

Despite the controversy surrounding the death of Dark Phoenix, the effect is no less convincing. Her demise provided a major turning point for the team and was commented on in other characters' dialog for more than a year following her death. Writer Chris Claremont used the book as a platform for remorse; the death of Phoenix seemed to acutely affect him as well as his readers and characters. She was finally exorcised when Mastermind sought revenge and the battle finally allowed Cyclops to let go of the shred of hope that she might have survived.

To be sure, the death of Phoenix began the current crop of hero deaths. Her own was well handled, despite the events that led up to it. It was neither a cop out nor coy; it was real.

Equally real was *The Death of Captain Marvel*, in which the death itself was the focal point of the entire story and not just a singular event. After a reasonably long life full of adventure, Mar-Vell was diagnosed as suffering from cancer. Incurable cancer. His life and times were recounted by writer/artist Jim Starlin in a Graphic Novel that was a touching tribute leading up to the death and beyond. Surprisingly, it was not as tragic as one might have guessed as friends, comrades, and enemies paid their last respects to a rapidly failing Mar-Vell.

It offered the other side of the coin: instead of a jarring event, the realization of death lent an undercurrent to the entire saga. Captain Marvel's death was a quiet surprise, downplayed yet emotional and as close to reality to such things as I've seen in comics.

Earlier Starlin had also chronicled the death of Adam Warlock, another outer space hero and in both cases, gave the stories a science fiction twist at the end offering hope of infinite afterlives in one form or another. He seems to relish telling us that we are all simply passing through life to get to somewhere else that is maybe a little better and less painful. His persistence with this theme pays off in some beautiful moments in his work.

If Mar-Vell's death was realistic, then Elektra's, in the pages of *Daredevil*, was the most painful. She was introduced as a former love of Matt (Daredevil) Murdock's before becoming a trained mercenary. Their paths crossed again each at opposite ends of the law and each flirting with the past without ever consummating their renewed acquaintance. She met her end brutally at the hands of Bullseye, the man she replaced in the Kingpin's crime syndicate. The gruesome details of her death and the following ramifications on Daredevil's life allowed a part of a hero's psyche to be examined in such a way as never before. Here was Daredevil, a man very much in love, faced with the death of that love once and for all. Elektra died a very real death, bleeding on the streets of New York before collapsing in Murdock's arms. In these circumstances, she provided a contrast to the earlier death of Phoenix who was blasted out of existence by an ancient alien weapon on another planet.

Writer/artist Frank Miller brought Elektra back to life through some fancy mumbo jumbo that also saved the Black Widow from extermination in the followup storyline in *Daredevil*. Elektra's death brought about an animal response, like slowing down to watch an accident on the side of the road. There was something terribly frightful in her eyes as she died and struggled to tell Murdock that—maybe—she loved him too. The rebirth of Elektra was fine story-telling, too, but detracted from the embraceable reality that led up to her death.

The spring of 1984 was a bad season for Jack Byrne characters. First, Reed and Sue lost an unborn child in the pages of *Fantastic Four* and a month later, Guardian died in *Alpha Flight*. The death of the child was a surprise since innocents are usually spared in the world of comics. This time the reverse became a haunting portrait of comic book events. In an effort to accomplish something unique and dramatic, the creators may well have gone too far in this instance. But at least we were spared the eventuality of having another mutant offspring from that couple.

The death of Guardian was a victim of its own hype. The hinting and publicity started even before the series premiered—so far ahead of itself that the actual event became anti-climatic. The major fault of the story was not in the book but in the fact that it became more of a guessing game than an emotional outlet. That it was set up as a plot device from the very beginning lent a distinct lack of spontaneity to the issue.

About the same time, however, the *New Teen Titans* were faced with the death of Terra who came to them as a wanderling and was slowly revealed to be a double agent for the Terminator. The simple approach writer Marv Wolfman and artist George Perez used for her was refreshing, and that she died as a victim of her own instability was powerful and satisfying. The series once again proved itself adept at handling the problems of children as previously demonstrated in the *Runaways* storyline as well as this Terra conclusion.

The use of a hero's death is slowly evolving as a story device, and the preceding examples approached the method from different angles. Writers today are still searching for new ways to use the concept effectively without repeating each other. No matter how many ways there are to die, the result is still the same: even in comics. The loss is no less great even if the story does not hold up. But in a medium where battles are so hard fought and death still so infrequent, is it any wonder that death will draw attention to itself as something extraordinary? The heroes of our imagination it seems, cheat death every day and it gives one pause to wonder when the gamble of being a hero might not pay off. ●



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In THE DEATH OF CAPTAIN MARVEL, the death itself was the focal point of the entire story and not just a singular event—a quiet surprise, downplayed yet emotional.

THE GOLDEN AGE DIRECTORY

Installment 5: Captains, Doctors, and Fighting Americans

Welcome to the fifth episode of Golden Age comic reprint indexing. This time we finish up the Captains with Captain Marvel, Jr., one of the longer entries and Captains Midnight, Triumph and Truth. Some of the best super-heroes of the Golden Era are included in this installment—Crimebuster, Daredevil, Dr. Fate, Doll Man, and Fighting American, to name a few.

A number of heroes indexed in Installment Five appeared in IW-Super reprint books such as *Doll Man*, *Daring Adventures*, and *Strange Planets*. In case there's someone out there who is unfamiliar with these titles, they were bootlegged reprints of Golden Age books with new covers and pages deleted where necessary to make them fit into a 32-page length. Israel Waldman was the instigator of these books, and, even though the publication was probably as illegal as heck, IW-Supers offer a fine variety of samplings from the Golden Age. Even Dynamic Man boasted one reprint issue drawn by Mac Raboy, although you may sample the rest at your own taste—or risk.

Next time we'll start with The Flash and continue through one of the most-reprinted heroes of the Golden Age—the Human Torch himself!

On to the index!

CAPTAIN MARVEL, Jr.

Captain Marvel, Jr. #1, Nov. 18, 1942
(*Flashback* #17, Dynapubs)
"The Cracked Safecracker"—12 pgs.
"The Death Maker"—10 pgs.
["Origin of Captain Marvel, Jr."]—3 pgs.
"The Shadow That Walked"—12 pgs.
"Wings Over Dazaggar"—17 pgs.

Captain Marvel, Jr. #11, Sept. 1943
(*Limited Collector's Edition* #C-21, 1973)
"Trouble in Troll Land"—13 pgs.

Captain Marvel, Jr. #12, Oct. 1943
(*Shazam! From the Forties to the Seventies*, Crown)
"In Baffin Land"—8 pgs.

Captain Marvel, Jr. #14, Dec. 1943
(*Shazam!* #8, Dec. 1973)
"The Vest Pocket Levitator"—12 pgs.

Captain Marvel, Jr. #17, Mar. 1944
(*Shazam! From the Forties to the Seventies*, Crown)
"Captain Marvel, Jr. Meets Himself in the Future"—8 pgs.

Captain Marvel, Jr. #46, Feb. 1947
(*Best of DC* #22, Mar.-Apr. 1982)
"Freddy Freeman's Christmas"—8 pgs.

Captain Marvel, Jr. #54, Oct. 1947
(*Limited Collector's Edition* #C-27, 1974)
"The Man With 100 Heads"—7 pgs.

Captain Marvel, Jr. #78, Oct. 1949
(*Shazam! From the Forties to the Seventies*, Crown)
"The Voodoo Clock"—8 pgs.

Captain Marvel, Jr. #83, Mar. 1950
(*Shazam!* #14, Sept.-Oct. 1974)
"The Man Who Lived History"—9 pgs.

Captain Marvel, Jr. #92, Dec. 1950
(*Shazam!* #13, July-Aug. 1974)
"Mrs. Wagner's Forbidden Room"—7 pgs.

Captain Marvel, Jr. #106, Feb. 1952
(*Shazam!* #21, Nov.-Dec. 1975)
"City in the Mirage"—8 pgs.

Captain Marvel, Jr. #118, Apr. 1953
(*Shazam!* #24, Spring 1976)
"In the Days of Robin Hood"—8 pgs.
(*Shazam!* #6, Jan.-Feb. 1975)
"The Lazy Genie"—5 pgs.

Captain Marvel, Jr. #119, May 1953
(*Shazam! From the Forties to the Seventies*, Crown)
"The Fourth Dimensional Elephant"—6 pgs.

Marvel Family #7, May 1953
(*Shazam!* #17, Mar.-Apr. 1975)
"The Idol of Vengeance"—7 pgs.

Marvel Family #25, July 1948
(*Shazam!* #5, Sept. 1973)
"Captain Marvel, Jr. Fights the Chomp"—7 pgs.

Master Comics #27, June 1942
(*Special Edition Series* #3, 1975)
["Captain Nazi in London"]—14 pgs.

Master Comics #28, July 1942
(*Special Edition Series* #3, 1975)
["Hitler's Headquarters of Horror"]—13 pgs.

Master Comics #29, Aug. 1942
(*Special Edition Series* #3, 1975)
["The Iron Heel of the Huns"]—14 pgs.

Master Comics #30, Sept. 1942
(*Special Edition Series* #3, 1975)
"Captain Marvel, Jr. Saves the Doomed Army"—14 pgs.

Master Comics #31, Oct. 1942
(*Special Edition Series* #3, 1975)
"The Case of the Missing Ambassador"—14 pgs.

Master Comics #32, Nov. 1942
(*Special Edition Series* #3, 1975)
"The Cripple Crimes"—14 pgs.

Master Comics #33, Dec. 9, 1942
(*Special Edition Series* #3, 1975)
"The Ghost Town Mystery"—12 pgs.

Master Comics #34, Dec. 30, 1942
(*Special Edition Series* #3, 1975)
["Captain Nazi Flies"]—12 pgs.

Master Comics #35, Jan. 27, 1943
(*Special Edition Series* #3, 1975)
["The Case of the Jolly Roger"]—12 pgs.

Master Comics #36, Feb. 24, 1943
(*Special Edition Series* #3, 1975)
["The Chetniks Vs. the Nazis"]—12 pgs.

Master Comics #37, Mar. 17, 1943
(*Special Edition Series* #3, 1975)
"The Black Grotto"—12 pgs.

Master Comics #38, May 5, 1943
(*Special Edition Series* #3, 1975)
"The Secret Weapon"—13 pgs.

Master Comics #39, June 4, 1943
(*Special Edition Series* #3, 1975)
"The Slave Trader"—13 pgs.

Master Comics #40, July 1943
(*Special Edition Series* #3, 1975)
"The Punching Poltes"—12 pgs.

Master Comics #41, Aug. 1943
(*Special Edition Series* #3, 1975)
"Captain Marvel, Jr. Fights the Marble Madness"—13 pgs.

Master Comics #42, Sept. 1943
(*Special Edition Series* #3, 1975)
"Woton"—13 pgs.

CAPTAIN MIDNIGHT

Captain Midnight #1, Sept. 30, 1942
(*Flashback* #37, Dynapubs)
"Invisible Menace"—13 pgs.
"The Murder Trap"—20 pgs.
"Captain Midnight Rescues a Romeo"—7 pgs.
"The Secret Tub"—10 pgs.

CAPTAIN TRIUMPH

Crack Comics #42, May 1946
(DC *100 Page Super Spectacular* #DC-18, July 1973)
["All That Glitters Is Not Gold"]—15 pgs.

CAPTAIN TRUTH

Gold Medal Comics #1, 1945
(*Great Action* #1, 1958)
"Vanishing Boy"—5 pgs.

THE CLAW

Silver Streak Comics #1, Dec. 1939
(*Comic Reprints*, Oklahoma)
["Enter the Claw"]—8 pgs.

Silver Streak Comics #6, Sept. 1940
(*Flashback* #27, Dynapubs)
["Back from the Dead"]—8 pgs.



By PETER LUST, STEVE JOHNSON, and LOU MOUGIN

Daredevil #25, June 1944
(*Golden Age Collector* #2)
["The Dwarf Devils"]—6 pgs.

THE COMET

Pep Comics #1, Jan. 1940
(*Flashback* #17, Dynapubs)
"Origin of the Comet"—6 pgs.

COMMANDO YANK

America's Greatest Comics #7, Apr. 28, 1943
(*Flashback* #32, Dynapubs)
"Danger at the Dike"—12 pgs.

CRIMEBUSTER

Boy Comics #3, Apr. 1942
(*Crawford's Encyclopedia of Comic Books*, 1978)
"The Origin of Crimebuster"—12 pgs.

CRIMSON AVENGER

Detective Comics #27, May 1939
(*Limited Collector's Edition* #C-28, 1974)
["The Abe Gold Murder Case"]—6 pgs.

DAREDEVIL

Daredevil Battles Hitler #1, July 1941
(*Flashback* #1, Dynapubs)
"Daredevil Battles Hitler"—54 pgs.
NOTE: This story also guest-stars Silver Streak, The Claw, and other non-costumed Lev Gleason characters

Daredevil Comics #13, Oct. 1942
(*Golden Age of Comics* #1, Dec. 1982)
"Daredevil Battles the Blackhearts in White"—20 pgs.

Silver Streak Comics #6, Sept. 1940
(*Flashback* #7, *Dynapubs*)
(*Magnificent Superheroes of Comics' Golden Age*, 1977)
"Master of Courage"—6 pgs.

Silver Streak Comics #7, Jan. 1941
(*Long Tom's Americana Comix*, 1972)
["Daredevil Battles the Claw"]—16 pgs.

THE DEFENDER

USA Comics #1, Aug. 1941
(*Flashback* #3, Dynapubs)
["The Hideous Dame Kackle"]—18 pgs.

THE DESTROYER

All-Winners Comics #12, Spring 1944
(*Marvel Super-Heroes* #12, Dec. 1967)
"The Beachhead Blitz"—7 pgs.

DOC SAVAGE

Doc Savage Comics #6, Nov. 1941
(*Golden Age of Comics* #7, Jan. 1984)
["The Peace Clan"]—19 pgs.

Doc Savage Comics #9, Sept. 1942
(*Comics: The Golden Age* #2, May 1984)
["The Secret Oil Base"]—16 pgs.

DOCTOR FATE

More Fun Comics #56, June 1940
(*The Immortal Dr. Fate* #1, Jan. 1985)
["The Return of Wotan"]—6 pgs.

More Fun Comics #57, July 1940
(*Superman* #252, June 1972)
["Murders by Phantom Fire"]—6 pgs.

More Fun Comics #65, Mar. 1941
(*Wanted* #3, Nov. 1972)
["The Fish-Men of Nyarl-Amen"]—6 pgs.

More Fun Comics #66, Apr. 1941
(*Detective Comics* #439, Feb.-Mar. 1974)
["The Leopard Girl"]—6 pgs.

More Fun Comics #67, May 1941
(*Justice League of America* #95, Dec. 1971)
(*DC Special Blue-Ribbon Digest* #9, May 1981)
["The Origin of Dr. Fate"]—6 pgs.

More Fun Comics #68, June 1941
(*Detective Comics* #442, Aug.-Sept. 1974)
["The Mysterious Murders of the Baranga Marshes"]—10 pgs.

More Fun Comics #73, Nov. 1941
(*Wanted* #8, June-July 1973)
["Encounter with Mr. Who"]—10 pgs.

DOCTOR MID-NITE

All-American Comics #25, Apr. 1941
(*Justice League of America* #95, Dec. 1971)
["How He Began"]—8 pgs.

All-American Comics #88, Aug. 1947
(*DC 100-Page Super Spectacular #DC-20*, Sept. 1973)
"Tarantula Unmasks Dr. Mid-Nite"—7 pgs.

All-American Comics #101, Sept. 1948
(*Detective Comics* #445, Feb.-Mar. 1975)
"Case of the Talking Shadows"—6 pgs.

[Unpublished Golden Age story]
(*Adventure Comics* #418, Apr. 1972)
"The Sight Stealers"—6 pgs.

DOLL MAN

Doll Man #1, Autumn 1941
(*Flashback* #9, Dynapubs)
"The Black Gondolier"—10 pgs.
"Black Gold"—10 pgs.
["An Innocent Man"]—10 pgs.
"The Phantom Swordsman"—10 pgs.
"The Vulture"—13 pgs.

Doll Man #13, Summer 1947
(*Action Comics* #437, July 1974)
"The Man Who Returned from the Dead"—12 pgs.

Doll Man #15, Winter 1948
(*Wanted* #5, Jan. 1973)
"The Man in the Iron Mask"]—12 pgs.

Doll Man #20, Jan. 1949
(*Doll Man* #11, 1963)
"Sleep"—12 pgs.
["The Stork"]—11 pgs.

Doll Man #23, July 1949
(*Doll Man* #15, 1964)
["The Fool Killer"]—10 pgs.
"The Minstrel"—11 pgs.

Doll Man #28, May 1950
(*Doll Man* #17, 1964)
["Pluvius, the Storm-Maker"]—9 pgs.
"The Flame"—7 pgs.
"The Undertaker and Tom Thumb"—8 pgs.

Doll Man #32, Dec. 1950
(*DC 100-Page Super Spectacular #DC-14*, Feb. 1973)
"Guardians Against Crime"—12 pgs.

Feature Comics #123, June 1948
(*Detective Comics* #440, Apr.-May 1974)
"A Million-Dollar Corpse"—11 pgs.

DYNAMIC MAN

Dynamic Comics #12, Nov. 1944
(*Daring Adventures* #16, 1964)
["The Scarlet Plague"]—8 pgs.

Dynamic Comics #16, Oct. 1945
(*Daring Adventures* #11, 1963)
["The Tangerine Terror"]—6 pgs.

Dynamic Comics #23, Nov. 1947
(*Dynamic Comics* #1, 1964)
"Framed: Dynamic Man"—7 pgs.

Dynamic Comics #24, Mar. 1948
(*Daring Adventures* #10, 1963)
"Killers on the Bounce"—6 pgs.

THE ECHO

Dynamic Comics #12, Nov. 1944
(*Daring Adventures* #16, 1964)
["The Panther Murders"]—6 pgs.

Dynamic Comics #16, Oct. 1945
(*Daring Adventures* #11, 1963)
["The Snake Cult of Brother Rath"]—6 pgs.

EL CARIM

Master Comics #21, Dec. 1941
(*Flashback* #18, Dynapubs)
["Adventure in India"]—7 pgs.

ELECTRO

Marvel Mystery Comics #4, Feb. 1940
(*Flashback* #26, Dynapubs)
["The Origin of Electro"]—8 pgs.

THE ENCHANTED DAGGER

Yankee Comics #1, Sept. 1941
(*Strange Planets* #9, 1958)
["Origin Story"]—7 pgs.

ETTA CANDY AND THE HOLLIDAY GIRLS

Wonder Woman #5, June-July 1943
(*Four Star Spectacular* #6, Jan.-Feb. 1977)
["The Toothache"]—3 pgs.



THE FALCON

Human Torch #1, Fall 1940
(*Flashback* #21, Dynapubs)
["Jim Peterson, Political Boss"]—7 pgs.

FIERY MASK

Human Torch #1, Fall 1940
(*Flashback* #21, Dynapubs)
["The Strange Case of the Bloodless Corpse"]—10 pgs.

FIGHTING AMERICAN

Fighting American #1, Apr.-May 1954
(*Fighting American* #1, Oct. 1966)
"Break the Spy Ring"—10 pgs.
(Reprinted as "Peter Piper's Red Vipers")
"Duel to the Finish Line"—7 pgs.

Fighting American #2, June-July 1954
(*Fighting American* #1, Oct. 1966)
"Find the King of the Crime Syndicate"—7 pgs.
"The League of the Handsome Devils"—9 pgs.

Unpublished 1955 story
(*Fighting American* #1, Oct. 1966)
"Roman Scoundrels"—8 pgs.

Unpublished 1955 story
(*Fighting American* #1, Oct. 1966)
"Round Robin"—6 pgs.

Unpublished 1955 story
(*Fighting American* #1, Oct. 1966)
"The Secret of Yafata's Moustache"—7 pgs.

FIGHTING YANK

Fighting Yank #11, Mar. 1945
(*Golden Age Collector* #3, SFCA)
(*Golden Age of Comics* #2, 1982)
["The Phony Martian Invasion"]—12 pgs.

THE FIREBALL

Pep Comics #17, July 1941
(*Flashback* #16, Dynapubs)
["The Smuggling Operation"]—7 pgs.

FIREBRAND

Police Comics #1, Aug. 1941
(*Comic Reprints: Oklahoma*)
["Introducing Firebrand"]—11 pgs.

Police Comics #3, Oct. 1941
(*Golden Age Collector* #3)
["Boss Slaine: Traitor"]—11 pgs.

THE FLAME

Wonderworld Comics #4, Aug. 1939
(*Comics The Golden Age* #1, Mar. 1984)
["The Dreaded Doxol"]—7 pgs.

Wonderworld Comics #9, Aug. 1940
(*Crawford's Encyclopedia of Comic Books,* 1978)
["The Underwater Raiders"—9 pgs.

Introduction by ALAN MOORE
ECHAVICS
by Jaime Hernandez
IT WILL CHANGE WHAT YOU EXPECT FROM COLOR COMICS.
COMING IN MAY FROM FANTAGRAPHICS BOOKS

COMICS IN REVIEW

R.A. Jones on *Rocket Raccoon #1, Jaxon's Illustrated Tales #1, Marvel Super Heroes Secret Wars #12, Savage Ninja #1, Not Available Comics,* and *Crisis on Infinite Earths #1.*

A FUR PIECE

ROCKET RACCOON #1
written by BILL MANTLO
illustrated by MIKE MIGNOLA
colored by GLYNIS WEIN
edited by CARL POTTS
Marvel Comics Group
75¢

Somewhere in space lies the solar system known as the Keystone Quadrant, entirely surrounded by an impenetrable force barrier. The...er, kystone planet of that quadrant is known as Halfworld. Half of the planet is inhabited by robots, living in a steel environment. The other half contains the forested domain of a race of intelligent animals. The animals' main chore is to provide comfort and joy for the insane humans who share their home.

The primary way in which they bring happiness to the "loonies" is by creating toys for their pleasure. Unfortunately, the two major toy manufacturers are on the verge of a devastating trade war. Only one man—uh, beast—can stop the madness: Ranger Rocket Raccoon.

The character of Rocket Raccoon was first introduced in an obscure back-up feature many years ago. He finally re-surfaced in the pages of *The Incredible Hulk,* and is now the subject of a four-issue limited series.

Upon reading the first issue, I am left with ambiguous feelings. It certainly was not bad by any means, though some of the attempts at humor fizzled. Neither was it remarkably good. It falls somewhere in that vast gray area we simply call average. You probably won't hate it or love it, at best you'll merely like or dislike it.

I have no doubt at all regarding the art. Some time back, I predicted that Mike Mignola would develop into a major talent. While this series may not attract a sufficiently large audience to make him a "fan favorite," it should definitely enhance his reputation as a penciller. Providing a commendable helping brush is inker Al Gordon, who has himself displayed great development since entering the business. What was once an occasionally heavy-handed technique has become a fine line which enhances rather than fights the pencils. His recent work on the *Fantastic Four* was excellent.

The concepts introduced in this premiere issue offer intriguing possibilities, if scripter Bill Mantlo can pull them together, but it's hard for me to shake off my totally neutral feelings about the series. Don't be apologetic if you decide to give it a try—but don't feel guilty if you pass up this Keystone caper.

INDIAN GIVER

JAXON'S ILLUSTRATED TALES #1
written and illustrated by JACK JACKSON
FTR Publishing
$1.95

One of the founding fathers of the underground comics movement, Jaxon has devoted his efforts in recent years to a retelling of various events in the fascinating history of the Texas frontier, in such books as *Los Tejanos* and *Comanche Moon.* While I have enjoyed only minimal exposure to his works, I have always admired his choice of subject matter, since I have a great deal of interest in the American frontier.

With his newest venture, Jaxon has made a move a bit closer to the mainstream comics, without losing either the edge or the focus of his earlier efforts. This book is an anthology title which will allow the artist to present a variety of stories, and to stretch his artistic muscles. In my opinion, he's done himself right proud.

The book contains two stories which prove that if fact is not stranger than fiction, it can certainly be more horrifying. Both stories continue Jaxon's past themes, taking place in the days when Texas was but one part of Spain's vast holdings in the New World.

"A Mountain of Silver" is the story of a mysterious Apache, laden with silver, who periodically shows up in a Spanish settlement. On one level, it is a standard story of man's natural greed; but on another it is also a Lovecraftian tale of ancient demons and human sacrifice. The twin storyline never really merge smoothly, and the ending is weak, but visually it is a terrific piece.

Of much greater impact is the lead story, "God's Bosom." Based on a true incident, it follows a band of shipwrecked Spainards as they attempt to make their way back to civilization. Their every step is dogged by a tribe of cannibalistic Indians. The so-called "savages" out-think and outmaneuver the Spaniards at every turn, while the castaways find every vestige of their civilized veneer being stripped from them. It is a powerful tale, one demonstraing that true horror comes not from monsters, but from the smiling face of our fellow man. I can almost guarantee



illustrated by MIKE ZECK
colored by CHRISTIE SCHEELE
edited by TOM DeFALCO
Marvel Comics Group
$1.00

"The mad scenario you suggest is sheer nonsense!"

Those words are spoken by Doctor Doom in the final issue of Marvel's *Secret Wars* limited series, words put in his mouth by scripter Jim Shooter. It is possible that no other writer has ever penned a more fitting epithet to describe his own work.

Before pouncing on Shooter, I want to take a look at the art in this concluding chapter. Mike Zeck is a fine artist, he did good work on *Master of Kung Fu*, and grew even better with his pencilling of *Captain America*, particularly after teaming with inker John Beatty.

I hope those years of progress have not gone down the drain. His efforts on this series have been poor—incredibly so in this final issue. There is little attention given to detail: it appears to be rushed, with some characters drawn as little more than stick figures. Less thought seemed to go into some of the illustrations than you would expect from a Smurf cartoon.

I'm sure the pay must have been good for this series, but I sincerely hope it hasn't jeopardized Zeck's credibility as an artist. This final issue was obviously handed out to several different inkers, though Beatty received solo "credit," if that is the right word. (Two of the pinch-hit inkers appear to have been John Byrne and Joe Rubinstein.)

Poor art can be, if not ignored, at least overlooked. The same is not true of poor writing—and there is no getting around the fact that this was the most badly written series from Marvel since the execrable *U.S. 1*. At a recent convention, Jim Shooter reportedly sloughed off criticism by saying that he had done the best he could in writing the thing. That's well and good, Mr. Shooter—but how many ex-comics writers can make the same claim with equal validity?

The most basic definition of a story tells you that it must contain a resolution of some sort—yet nothing is resolved here. Attempts to excuse this could be made on the grounds that a sequel is even now in the works. That excuse won't wash—it is possible to present a final resolution while still leaving plot threads which can be carried over. Besides, a few hundred thousand fans invested their money and 12 months in this book—don't they deserve an ending of some sort?

The reason given for the Beyonder's actions—and therefore the reason for the series—is ludicrous and totally nonsensical. We learn in this final issue—from a Valley Girl water sprite!—that he summoned the various heroes and villains because he did not understand the human emotion of desire. Now, my dictionary defines desire as wish or a longing. Since the Beyonder wished to know more, he is himself experiencing desire—a fact of which a described omnipotent being would be well aware, though apparently a certain editor-in-chief was not.

Not only is his motive sheer lunancy, but we are never given the slightest indication that he achieves what he desires, since the Beyonder is never given form and we are never made privy to his thoughts. Instead, he simply drifts away at the end, as if nothing had happened—which indeed it hadn't.

The final nine pages seems nothing more than an afterthought, as Shooter hurriedly throws in little bits of business to jive with the changes that were carried over into the various characters' books. And what changes! We were told this series would have a major impact on the Marvel Universe. Spider-Man wears a black costume part-time now, and Iron Man's gloves no longer have stripes on them—for this you needed 12 issues?

Which leads to the most glaring bit of illogic—one which renders the entire series senseless and, if possible, makes the heroes appear even more stupid. The Beyonder, from the beginning, had been portrayed as a being of god-like power. He is able to destroy stars, form planets—and create human life, or restore it to the dead. His words to the protagonists were, "Slay your enemies and all you desire shall be yours." Why didn't the heroes simply go all out for a change and actually kill their foes? They could have then requested that the Beyonder restore them to life and return the whole gang to Earth. To have a band of heroes deliberately set out to kill would have been a much bolder step—it also could have been done in the space of a four-issue series, thus saving us from eight more months of garbage.

Marvel can disclaim all the criticism leveled at *Secret Wars*, on that upon reading it, you will be genuinely shaken.

This is certainly not a book I would recommend for younger readers; its intensity would probably be beyond their grasp. The rest of you, however, could do much worse than to pick up this first issue.

Jaxon has produced a fine piece of graphic art, especially in the first story (please continue in this vein, sir). Whatever you do, don't let the lack of color deter you from giving it a try. Jaxon is one of those artists who use monotone in ways which probably transcend the use of color. While his pencils haven't the smooth slickness of many mainstream artists, they more than compensate for this with their power.

As with most alternative titles, *Jaxon's Illustrated Tales* carries a price tag which makes me cringe, but I'm going to recommend that you kick loose a couple of bucks and give it a buy.

A BIG CIGARETTE?

MARVEL SUPER HEROES SECRET WARS #12
written by JIM SHOOTER

the basis that it has unquestionably been the most commercially successful title of 1984—but they know as well as you or I that "popular" and "good" are not synonymous words. Believe it or not, there is a certain sadness here; for I know that both Shooter and Zeck could have done better—but they didn't.

Now, *Secret Wars II* is forthcoming. For the first time, even without having seen a single page of it, I am sorely tempted to urge that you not buy the book.

And that saddens me even more.

ENTER THE DRAGGIN'

SAVAGE NINJA #1
written by EDWARD M. MANDEL
illustrated by MICHAEL CARR
colored by MARK SMITH
Cadillac Comics
$1.50

This comic has me somewhat confused. It may have been published as a joke. If so—it isn't funny. It may have been written and drawn by a pair of eager teenagers with rich, indulgent parents. If so—the parents did their children no favor.

Savage Ninja came to my attention by way of my local comic shop owner. He had been contacted by someone connected to the book who urged him to order the title, which they described as being on Baxter paper and containing "the best art you've seen in a while." As a follow-up to the phone conversation, a complimentary copy was sent to his store. He was kind enough to place it in my hands.

This atrocity has got to cop the award for being the most amateurish publishing effort I've seen this year. The story is so pitiful as to make the crummy Kung Fu flicks it emulates seem like the work of a Fellini or Bergman. The script displays absolutely no evidence if any literary skills, and in fact exhibits a gross ignorance of even the rudiments of grammar and punctuation.

There is no logical sense of pacing at all. A young boy named Michael Savage is enrolled in a martial arts school by his mother. Twelve pages are devoted to the few hours between the time she brings him through the front door and when he awakens the next morning. After that build-up, he is taken through his martial arts training and into adulthood in a single page!

At least that required six panels—his advance ninja training only covers three, and apparently consists of four people standing around with their swords crossed. If I had known it was so easy, I might have become one in my spare time (though an accompanying caption does state that the training requires "one full year").

Those scenes all unfold in flashback. The present day story involves a series of seemingly senseless, bloody fights. No motive is ever given for anyone's actions. It is obviously meant to pique your curiosity, but you don't really care.

And how about that art? I have a nephew who draws much better than this—and he's working in a meat packing plant. Actually, there is a certain bit of fun in viewing it, as the artist contorts bodies in as many ways as possible to avoid the necessity of having to draw hands. Any amateur artist will tell you that ideally you never should draw any hands at all. If you absolutely must draw a hand, draw it in the easiest position: which is a clenched fist. That rule of thumb, so to speak, is followed slavishly here.

There are other fun scenes as well. I liked the panel where Michael kneels on the floor between his mother and the teacher of the school, and they all appear to be lapping out of their shoes. Perhaps they are, this presumably being Japan—it's hard to tell, since we never see their feet again. (Bare feet are hard to draw, too.)

If the artist knows what proportion and perspective mean, he has chosen to ignore them. In a way, that's fun too, as you find yourself marveling at whatever magic enables these tiny bodies to support such huge heads.

To drop the flippancy for a moment, it is truly sad to see such a horrendous mess in print. There are many genuinely talented young men and women out there who are struggling to develop that talent and make the move into the professional ranks, and it's extremely discouraging when they see someone else being paid for something like this, which falls below the level of many fanzines. Luckily, I doubt that many of them will be seeing this book, especially if the publisher makes the mistake of sending advance copies to the distributors.

Oh—need I add that my friend the comic shop owner will not be ordering multiple copies of *Savage Ninja #1*?

FREUDIAN SLIPS

NOT AVAILABLE COMICS
written and illustrated by
VARIOUS ARTISTS
edited by MATT FEAZELL
Not Available Comics
25¢

A couple of weeks ago, I received a small packet from Matt Feazell. Inside were four of his eight-page, print-sized comic books, along with the suggestion that I might like to review them. Fine. I appreciated that, but there was just one little problem: Matt also sent me some of his press clippings from *The Comic Buyers Guide*, in which his books had been discussed by the likes of Cat Yronwode and Tony Isabella.

Hey, Matt...what am I—chopped liver? How come I was the last one you sent complimentary copies to, huh? Oh sure, I realize I'm no Cat Yronwode, but I ain't exactly the Invisible Man either. I'm known by nearly half the people on my block, for gosh sakes.

Besides, I like to get freebies just as much as Tony Isabella does.

Setting aside my unadulterated greed, penurious nature, and over-inflated ego, I decided the least I could do was read the cockamamie comics. After all, Matt laid out 37 cents in mailing them to me.

Not wishing to miss any of the subtleties in either story or art, I devoted a full five minutes to reading the four issues in hand. What can I tell you? They're less painful than either a root canal or an issue of *U.S. 1*. I think that pretty much says it all.

Unfortunately for you, however, I never say in one word what I can as easily say in twelve, so you'll have to put up with a few more paragraphs. The four books I received were copies of *Anti-Social Man*, *Cynicalman*, *Ant Boy*, and *Stupid Boy* (love that title!). With the exception of *Ant Boy*, they were drawn in a stick figure fashion which is highly reminiscent of the work of Leonardo Da Vinci—when he was two years old.

Some wise and sage person—Gary Groth, I think—once said that

comics were the perfect literature for reading in the bathroom. Not Available. Comics appear to have been written in the bathroom (and drawn, and lettered, and stapled).

But, like Daddy, my favorite of the bunch was *Stupid Boy*. Was there ever a title that so perfectly defined the lead character? In the issue before me, S.B. finds himself locked in a refrigerator. He then commences to recite the worst poetry this side of Dr. Seuss. That not only sums up the story—that is the story.



© 1985 Mark Frazell

Now I'd like to get serious for a moment.

Okay—having done that, let me just say this about Not Available Comics: they're crude, simplistic, ridiculous, nonsensical and totally lacking in any redeeming social value whatsoever—but what do you want for a quarter. *War and Peace*? They're more forgettable than your mother-in-law's birthday, but pick up a copy anyway. They make great gifts for people you don't like much.

And Matt . . . the next time you send out a batch of goodies—how about getting them to me before Cat and Tony? I've got feelings you know. (God, we critics are so sensitive.)

CRISIS ALERT

CRISIS ON INFINITE EARTHS #1

written by MARV WOLFMAN
illustrated by GEORGE PEREZ
inked by DICK GIORDANO
colored by ANTHONY TOLLIN
edited by MARV WOLFMAN
DC Comics
75¢

There's a put-down making the rounds in my neighborhood, which goes like this: "The new DC . . . is the old Marvel."

Only not as good.

That certainly seemed to be borne out with the release of DC's *Who's Who*—a rehash of Marvel's earlier encyclopedic series. DC's version is poorly designed, poorly executed and so poorly printed as to be virtually illegible. Thus, news of their upcoming *Crisis on Infinite Earths* was greeted with yawns and a general belief that it would be little more than an even worse version of Marvel's *Secret Wars* (for more on which, consult the next review).

I was surprised, and delighted, to learn that such was not the case. More significant changes occur within the opening ten pages of this first issue than within the entire run of *Secret Wars*. It truly appears as if a genuine effort will be made through the course of the book to get rid of the literary driftwood which has inevitably accumulated over the span of DC's 50 years of publication. Even for long-time readers such as myself, the plethora of duplicate Earths and costumed heroes can be confusing. If DC can clear up even half that confusion, it will have accomplished a great deal.

Let's get down to the specifics of this issue. Some unnamed and unknown force—represented as an enormous mass of energy—is consuming entire universes. At the beginning of this first chapter, the universe containing Earth-3 is destroyed—and that planet is, of course also vaporized, along with the super-powered characters living upon it. (This was a rather saddening event for me, as that planet's villainous Superwoman, though seldom used, has always held a certain attraction for me.)

Observing these events is the mysterious being called The Monitor, who has been seen in brief appearances throughout most of DC's comics during the past year. Under his direction, a coterie of heroes and villains from Earth-1 and Earth-2—past, present and future—is assembled to stop this all-consuming menace.

It is an intriguing and gripping story, well crafted by scripter Marv Wolfman, who—thanks to his stint with the TeenTitans—has developed into one of the better writers of superheroic comics fiction. He has succeeded in creating a true sense of anticipation, a desire to see just where it will lead. While it does appear that there may be a wholesale slaughter of characters, this will be at least somewhat balanced by the addition of new characters. The tragic figure, known as Pariah, introduced at the beginning of this saga, promises to be a cosmic hero in the mold of Jim Starlin's Adam Warlock.

For the next point, I intend to critique the art in this first issue—but not the art you saw in your copy of the comic. You'll understand why momentarily. A short time before the actual book hit the stands, DC sent me a photostat copy (for which I thank you, Peggy May). Pencils on the book were supplied by George Perez, with inking done by Dick Giordano. Perez has done an outstanding job, matching even the peak of excellence he reached with his work on the Teen Titans. Likewise for Mr. Giordano.

Unfortunately, you will probably never know just how good the art was, simply because it was torpedoed by something completely out of the artist's hands. The result is what forms the basis for my sole major complaint regarding this first issue.

The problem here is DC's decision to use the new, heavily-hyped, flexographic process to print this book. Because of its inadequacies, the lettering is often obscured, the lines of the art are faded, and the colors—when they are not so garish as to hurt the eye—contain spots wherein the tones are either bleached out or bleeding over into other areas.

I fully understand that any new process will contain a number of bugs which much be worked out—but that should have been done by initially using the process on such (relatively) minor titles as *Jonah Hex* or *Sgt. Rock*—not on a book which will serve as the cornerstone for DC's 50th Anniversary year. It horribly mars what would otherwise be a beautiful issue.

That complaint aside, Crisis is a series that, if it measures up to the promise of this first issue, will be well worth following. For too long, DC Comics has seemed content to hide in the shadow of Marvel. Perhaps with this series they will begin to seek the sun again. ●

AMAZING READERS

DAVE HARRIS
Los Angeles, CA

Puzzled by Top 100

My failure to comprehend your Top 100 list grows with every month. My confusion is not in understanding but in interpreting.

I live at college and purchase my comics through a subscription service in my home town (even though I'm in the bustling metropolis of L.A., I'm still faithful to my midwestern retailer).

Because of this service, I must choose what I buy *before* I see it. Naturally, I am stuck with some clunkers. I try to avoid most of them by not buying all Marvel first issues, "or all DC mini-series." I wonder if my situation could explain away the thousands who made *Kitty* and *Wolverine* so successful, or *The Secret Wars* or *Beauty and the Beast*? There must be people caught up in the marketing and end up stuck with something they don't like.

Perhaps that explains a portion of the problem, but not all of it. These questions (all examples in my opinion) still haunt me:

—How can an entirely mediocre book like *G.I. Joe* still sell decently at retailers, and a classic stand-by like *Wonder Woman* (equally mediocre) barely warrant continued publication?

—Since *Wonder Woman* sells so badly, why does DC continue to print it? *Supergirl* and *Superboy* both sold better and they were both cancelled. DC can't be worried about copyright can they? No one questions their copyright on *Supergirl*, even though it's not being printed.

—How can art quality explain a books success (as the most recent changes on *ROM* will sadly attest to) when *Kitty* and *Wolverine* and *The West Coast Avengers* display some of the least inspired artwork I've ever seen from those artists?

—How can solid scripting explain success (like Claremont's *X-Men* or Wolfman's *Titans*) when the incoherent jumbling of the *Secret Wars* incredibly tops them by nearly twice their normal pull?

—How can even paper quality dictate success (like the Legion's new Baxter book) when the books with the most visually dynamic look on this line paper, like the stunning *Somerset Holmes*, are sometimes not in the Top 100 at all?

My only answer is marketing. Marvel is riding all its books on a wave of hype. People keep buying them, so they keep making more. Which leads to more hype—more books—more . . . ? Where does it end? Hype builds more hype. I buy only the Marvel's I *like*. If I don't like it any more, I STOP BUYING IT. Sure, I'm a collector, but if I'm buying something I don't like, what am I collecting? I'm gathering a stack of trash whose only novelty to me is that the numbers on the covers are never the same.

★ *It could be worse, Dave, you could be trying to figure out the Billboard charts. I think that when you ask your questions, you're just not being multi-dimensional enough. DC continues to publish Wonder Woman to the indifference of fans everywhere because of the firm's involvement with the Wonder Woman Foundation. Believe it or not, the existence of that character has meant a lot to many women in all walks of life. (The She-Hulk, however, means a lot more to me.)*

G.I. Joe sells because the toys sell and are backed by big ad campaigns. It will sell more when the cartoon show hits the airwaves. Most of its customers are kids.

In fact, most of the people who like The Secret Wars *are kids. Kids traditionally are not as critical in their reading tastes as we adults like to think we are.*

My belief is that Marvel is catering more and more to the younger

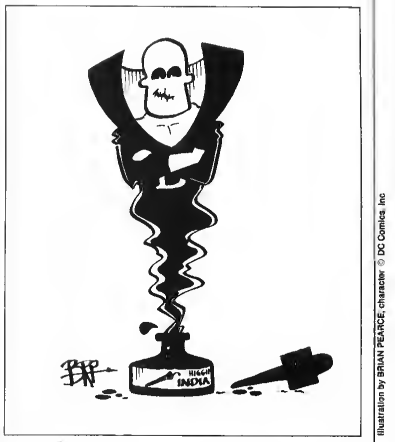


illustration by BRIAN PEARCE; character © DC Comics, Inc

c/o Amazing Heroes ● 707 Camino Manzanas ● Thousand Oaks, CA 91360

market. Star Wars #94, for instance, looks like a Star Comic part of their kiddie line. They'll continue to do books that appeal to older readers, but it may become more difficult to weed them out. —Art

IRA REMSEN HALL
Flushing, NY

Hall of Fame

Despite the fact that I have been sending unsolicited letters of commentary to your sister publication The Comics Journal ever since 1981, your magazine has never been a recipient of one from me. Within my circle of friends and business associates a letter from Ira Remsen Hall has been referred to (albeit with more than a touch of sarcastic element) as a valued collector's item of massive historical significance." This specifically has nothing to do with the magazine you edit, but I feel like putting it in anyway.

In **Amazing Heroes** #61, you inform reader Darren Raymond of Saskatchewan, Canada that you "have yet to see one positive piece of mail cross [your] desk regarding Secret Wars." It is not my wish to see you deprived.

I am very enthusiastic about Marvel's 12-issue limited series Marvel Super Heroes Secret Wars. Long have I admired the writing abilities of Editor-in-Chief James "Jim" Shooter, and I find myself aghast at the outpour of hate [mail] derived from the series. I almost feel offended by the vast quantity of anti-Secret Wars sentiment generated by fandom. In the Jim Shooter interview published in the British fanzine Fantasy Advertiser, Mr. Shooter makes mention of a sequel. I am much looking forward to this second round, as it were, of the Wars.

To what is the extent of my enthusiasm? I consider Secret Wars the pinnacle of Marvel Comics' entire publishing output, and of Jim Shooter personally it is my opinion that through the writing of this limited series he has shown himself to be a great human being. If I were in a position of authority at Marvel Comics I would recommend that Mr. Shooter be given a tremendous raise in salary, a promotion that would make even the immortal Stan Lee answerable to him, and I would also attempt to have Mr. Shooter nominated as a candidate for President of the United States of America in 1988. This, my friends, is the extent of my enthusiasm.

★ *Thank you, Ira. Your heartfelt sincerity has lifted the sheen of cynicism from my dung-colored glasses. I can now go forth and face the day like a true, nay, a genuine humanitarian.* —Art

J.O. RICHARDSON
London, ENGLAND

We Wuz Robbed

I had intended to write this letter after the conclusion of Secret Wars, but the final issue was conspicuous by its absence in its scheduled shipment. However, I cannot imagine that events in said issue will alter my view of the series as a whole, so I'll put in my ha'penny's worth now and have done with it.

Every objective critic has slated this book and rightly so, and yet sales represent an all time high. This seems to puzzle and anger the fan press. As far as I can tell, the aficionados feel bitter toward an unthinking public that gorges on Secret Wars whilst ignoring more worthy, independent publications. They have a valid point. It is this sort of behavior that can in time cripple the independent firms and thus reduce both quality and choice on the medium. However, the purchase of Secret Wars does not necessitate a rejection of less popular but finer titles, and thus it is unfair to attack 'discerning' fans who enjoy the odd bit of trash for jeopardizing the industry; they are merely subsidizing one of its less auspicious branches.

Jim Shooter knew that even a script as poor as his could not fail when accompanied by Marvel's biggest attractions; don't blame the readership because he scratched, however clumsily, an itch in the small of their collective backs. And anyway, Secret Wars wasn't that bad. If a regular book was of the same standard (do I hear *Dazzler*?) there wouldn't be this much fuss. As far as I'm concerned, the point wasn't that the series was so bad but that a flagship state-of-the-art title with truly top-name talent behind it like Secret Wars should have been outstanding. We wuz robbed.

God knows what Secret Wars II will be like.

★ *I think you've summed up the frustration of older readers pretty accurately, J.O. Somethin's goin' on with the Marvel staff, at least so far as the quality of their output is concerned.*

Like many publishing entities, they are becoming the very type of thing the firm originally rebelled against. Of course, so did Stalin, and so did the U.S. Congress during the McCarthy hearings. It may just be one of those unpleasant but unavoidable aspects of human nature that corporations (or successful revolutionaries) live and work that way. But there you are.

First Comics—are listening? —Art

T.M. MAPLE
Weston, ONT, Canada

A Little Dissatisfied

Call me adventurous, call me short-sighted—call me anything, but don't call me late for dinner. Call me a person who is wary about reading previews of comic books. Call me a person who is a little dissatisfied with #62.

Most of the giant preview issue was very nicely done. A lot of it was even useful—in particular there were some mini-series it convinced me to buy; others it warned me not to buy. But as happens all too often whenever previews are given (here or elsewhere), I thought there were several cases of too much being revealed—enough to spoil a good deal of suspense and enjoyment. For instance, let's take a look at a few titles from the A's.

Alpha Flight: We are told that Sasquatch, Snowbird, Northstar, and Shaman will leave the group, while Talisman and Box will join, and Guardian will return as "Dark Guardian." This will make the resolution of a lot of future stories much more predictable.

Atari Force: At a time when the Atari Force's whole dimension may or may not have been destroyed as far as we readers know, we are told that New Earth still exists, that the Force will return there and be put on trial, and that the Force will go to old Earth.

Amazing Spider-Man: We are told the final resolution of the "costume situation" that Spidey will use two costumes and also that Peter will not be returning to school, thus cutting down the possible range of the resolution of his dispute with Aunt May.

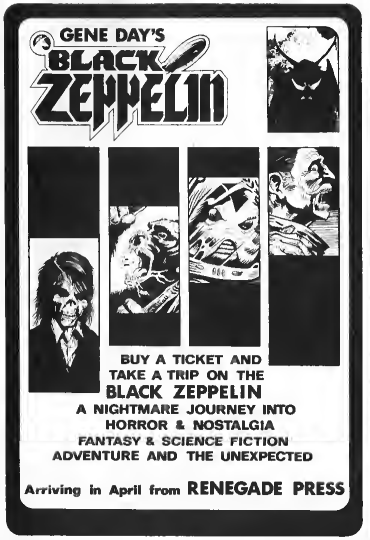
I could go on, but I think my point is made. There were many previews that managed to give a good indication of a title's direction in 1985 without giving out details that would spoil things for the readers. It's too bad that this was not true of all the previews.

★ *Quite frankly, T.M., I agree wholeheartedly with your criticism, and Kim and I are going to do our best to see that you read a lot less of that sort of thing in our next preview issue—which we've got to start working on any day now. AAIIEEEE!*

But seriously, put yourself in the place of your friendly neighborhood Spider-Man editor. Nothing of interest has happened to that character since Gwen Stacy broke her neck. The life of Peter Parker has become a big soap opera. It must be very difficult for these editors to come up with interesting things to say that don't give away plot details.

The very nature of a preview magazine puts them between a rock and a hard place—that is, when there's basically nothing very innovative going on in the book in question.

Therefore you, the discerning reader, can have a better idea what to buy and what to avoid. I hope. —Art



JOE SAPONARO
Brooklyn, NY

TV or Not TV

Amazing Heroes #61's "News-flash" about *DNAgents*' possibility as a TV series reminds me of a recent Simon & Simon regarding a comic book murder. Recent Marvel covers and some subtle *DNA* references were in that episode. Too bad Alan Brennert, who has written both S&S and comics, didn't handle that episode. He'd probably make the aspects of the comics scene more accurate and the story radically different.

★ *I saw that show too, Joe. The scenes in the comic store were shot, I believe, in Hi-De-Ho in Santa Monica, CA. I didn't catch who had written it, but I was certain it wasn't Alan because he had worked in a bookstore before graduating to the world of unreality in Hollywood. Alan, I'm sure, never would have written a scene where a shop proprietor tells potential customers that it's okay to sit in the store and read a couple of expensive back issues. It just isn't done in high-class capitalistic society.*

Alan, by the way, has a new novel from Tor Books called Kindred Spirits. *Fans of his comic book stories and television work might want to check it out.* —Art

STEVE MARKGRAF
Madison, WI

Goodbye Harvey, Hello Star

Recently Marvel's Star Comics appeared on the market to "fill the void left when Harvey Comics went out of business." DC is also rumored to be working on such a line, including (I hope) a Sugar and Spike comic. Publishing comics for children is a necessary step for us if we are to have comics fans ten years from now.

Many people in the comics industry have cut down Marvel for trying to flood the market with titles and to push smaller companies out of business. The bad news is, this trend is getting worse, not better.

AMAZING READERS

Between Marvel, Epic, and Star, Marvel publishes over 60 different titles. What I find distressing is that the comic retailers who accuse Marvel of flooding the market are promoting these Star Comics to no end. They never sold a Marvel comic in their stories, laugh at the mention of Charlton Comics, carry Carl Barks reprints and nothing else from Whitman, and will order X-rated comics for the few people who want them, but won't touch Archies with a ten-foot pole.

The direct-sales market system in comics allows small publishers to exist that otherwise never would have. The system can backfire, however. The direct-sales market allows smaller mainstream publishers to go out of business by taking the comic buyer out of the grocery, where he can buy Harvey Comics, and bringing him into the comics shop, where he can't. Eventually Harvey stopped publishing.

Marvel is out to make a buck, like any other large business. As much as we don't like it, if Star Comics sell, they will produce more. DC will probably join in. The rich will get richer. Harvey's Richie Rich won't. Comics shops will make money on Marvels and Stars, they never did on Richie Rich.

Buy only the quality comics, regardless of company name. Marvel produces many fine comics, and most of the Star comics look good. But there are a lot of other good comics out that don't say Marvel. Buy them, too.

Children's comics are only the beginning. If you like Archies or *Sgt. Rock* or *G.I. Combat*, or *Jonah Hex*, or if you like independent black-and-white comics, they're probably next.

★ *As I understand it, Richie Rich was, once upon a time, the biggest selling comic in the world, so it's difficult for me to be too sorry Harvey Comics is no longer with us. I don't particularly care for the Star Line from Marvel, but it does the one thing that Harvey apparently could not—speak to the kids of the '80s. Richie Rich and Casper, etc., were all characters who made sense to kids growing up in the '50s and '60s, and those times aren't with us any more. Harvey couldn't adapt.*

At least, that's my opinion. I think it's fair to criticize Marvel for the quality of its product, but not for being good business folk. They saw a market and they went after it. Of course, Star is doing well now because it's new and it's from Marvel. How well will it be doing a year from now? I suspect it will still be with us, but some of its current titles won't. —Art

JOHN WELLS
Batavia, IA

Additions and Corrections

I'm delighted to see "The Golden Age Directory" begin in **AMAZING HEROES** #63. It's something I've been wanting to see for ages. I'm casting my vote now for a "Silver Age Directory" when this feature ends.

I found three errors in the first installment. First, there were two omissions that I know of. They were:

Batman #18, Aug.-Sept. 1943 (*Detective Comics* #443, Oct.-Nov. 1974) "The Secret of Hunter's Inn"—12 pp.

Batman #83, Apr. 1954 (*Limited Collectors' Edition* #C-44, June-July 1976) "The Deep Sea Diver Mystery"—10 pp.

Also, "The Origin of the Batman" (*Batman* #47) wasn't reprinted in *Batman From the Thirties to the Seventies*. It probably should have been but it wasn't.

★ *Thanks, John. I like DC's Golden Age stories myself. Well, many of them, anyway. I, personally, myself, that is to say, speaking strictly for me, I'd like it mucho if DC regularly published a reprint title of swell Golden Age stories featuring my favorite characters. A book of Alfred Bester's Green Lantern stories, or Henry Kuttner's, would be peachy with me.*

By the way, as long as we're tying up loose ends, Peter Garcia writes from Puerto Rico to tell us that Marvel published two paperback books containing Star Wars stories that had been previously published only in Britain. Bill Williams, from Jackson, MS, points out that Marvel Comics never did explain—within a story—why Jabba the Hutt looked like just another alien in his first appearance—and how he had mutated into a grotesque glob of yecch by the time of Return of the Jedi.

Thanks, guys. **AMAZING HEROES** *needs readers like you if its retrospectives will continue to reach their usual pinnacles of excellence.* —Art



Illustration by BRIAN PEARCE, character © Marvel Comics Group.

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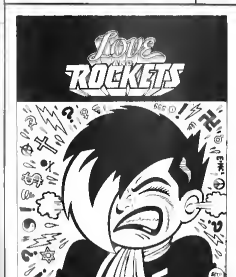


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